



# THE WAY OF GANDHI AND NEHRU

by  
S. ABID HUSAIN



ASIA PUBLISHING HOUSE

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1959

PRINTED IN INDIA  
BY Z. T. BANDUKWALA AT LEADERS' PRESS PRIVATE  
LIMITED, BOMBAY, AND PUBLISHED BY P. S. JAYASINGHE,  
ASIA PUBLISHING HOUSE, BOMBAY

*To*

SHAFIQ-UR-RAHMAN KIDWAI

*who lived and died following*

*The Way of Gandhi and Nehru*





## CONTENTS

<i>Foreword by</i> DR. ZAKIR HUSAIN	ix
<i>Preface</i>	xiii
I TRUTH AND LOVE	i
II RAMRAJYA	34
III THE FIRST STAGE OF RAMRAJYA	49
IV TOWARDS PERFECT NON-VIOLENCE	68
V MODERN HUMANISM	89
VI WELFARE STATE	127
VII THE FIRST STEP	140
VIII GANDHI OR NEHRU	152
IX GANDHI AND NEHRU	163
<i>Index</i>	177



## FOREWORD

GREAT men are not all alike. Some of them are great because of the environment that shapes them and imprints itself on them and makes them its symbols. Others are great because they are all that their environment is not. All that is suppressed and obliterated in the environment gets embodied in them and bursts forth from them. Some great men are made by the age in which they live; others make the age what it is. The two great men whose lives and teachings and whose impact on the Indian scene is the subject of this admirable study, have helped, as is given to only a few, to make modern India what it is and what it promises to evolve into. The future of our country will, in a considerable measure, be the outcome of the action upon the contemporary environment of these two men of unexampled will power, vision and genius. The understanding of the moral force, intellectual insight and the social purpose which have worked through these two outstanding personalities is essential to a proper appreciation of the evolving pattern of Indian life and for a fruitful possibility of contributing to it.

Different in many ways, with apparently divergent mental constitutions and varying social and personal emphases, they yet were bound to each other with such silken ties of camaraderie, love and reverence that the Mahatma could unequivocally designate the younger comrade as his "political successor". The differences of approach and emphasis, however, seem to indicate basic differences of outlook, and the present generation of Indians, engaged in the building up of a new life and fascinated equally by the charm of both, cannot sometimes escape a sense of confusion and bewilderment. It is true that these two great personalities are too near to us in time to be properly viewed in the right perspective. But the practical and the pragmatic urge to understand them by a

comparative study is almost inescapable for us, both from the personal and the national points of view. A proper appreciation of the nature and direction of the forces they represent, of their impact on our present and future, and a proper adjustment between them is essential for the sound development of our national life, as well as for the stability of the spiritual and moral equilibrium of its individual instruments.

It is a matter of gratification that Dr. Abid Husain has undertaken this difficult but essential task. Few men would be as qualified to do this. Dr. Abid Husain has had close personal contacts both with Gandhiji and Panditji. He has made a thorough study of their writings, most of which he has translated into Urdu with rare elegance and faithfulness. He has approached them with the faith of a follower tempered with reason characteristic of his philosophical insight and scholarly objectivity. He has the rare gift of taking an impartial and detached view of things even in case of deep emotional involvement and personal loyalty. He could well be expected to do justice to both his heroes—and his present study amply justifies that expectation.

As far as the interpretation of Gandhi's and Nehru's view of life is concerned, I feel every reader will agree with Dr. Husain's systematic and well-documented exposition. Opinion might well differ from him where he seeks to establish that the ultimate social ideals of the two are divergent but their immediate or short-term targets are very similar, if not identical.

I think the author has made a fruitful distinction between Gandhiji's long-term and short-term programmes. It helps to resolve many an apparent inconsistency which a student of his writings does not fail to notice during his first encounter. But the modern analytical mind will, perhaps, experience some difficulty in getting convinced, with the author, that the short-term programmes of both Gandhi and Nehru are substantially the same and shall lead the Indian people for

a considerable time to come in the same direction of development. To realize the unity of feeling, thought and action, which exists deep down in the consciousness of both, a synthetic—perhaps a mystical—approach is needed. This approach, though by no means India's exclusive monopoly, is yet eminently characteristic of her mode of thinking.

This book signifies the beginning of the discussion of a significant and vital problem of India's future growth. It is, indeed, a very good beginning and we should heartily welcome it.

*Ranchi : 30 August 1958*

ZAKIR HUSAIN



## P R E F A C E

AFTER World War I, a sudden wave of excitement and hope arose in the minds of young people, specially students, in India, which seemed to give a fresh flavour, a new zest to life. This could, no doubt, be explained in terms of various political, social and economic factors. But Indians are apt to see historical, even cosmic forces, embodied in personalities. So we students felt that the new spirit which was stirring within us was inspired by two guiding stars who presided over our national destiny in those days—Tagore and Gandhiji.

Both were creating in us the life-giving love of liberty and sense of self-respect. Gandhiji exhorted us to achieve inward *Swaraj* by getting rid of fear, greed and blind passion, and outward *Swaraj* by throwing off the foreign yoke. Tagore asked us to build up through a harmonious integration of the culture of the East and West, a world culture which would pave the way for the universal brotherhood of man.

We loved and honoured both, but Tagore seemed to be nearer to us. The vanity of youth made us regard ourselves, by virtue of our Western education, to be more enlightened and advanced (the term “progressive” was not in vogue yet) than most of our fellow-countrymen. So Gandhiji appeared to us to have a certain shade of puritanism, obscurantism and narrow nationalism, while in Tagore we found the large-mindedness and comprehensive humanism on which we prided ourselves.

But in a few years Gandhiji's influence imperceptibly pervaded our minds, so that it changed not only our thoughts but our very way of thinking, and we began to look at Gandhiji, at Tagore, at ourselves and at life itself with a different eye.

This experience came to different people at different times



under different circumstances. I shall mention my own case. It was in November, 1921, at Oxford, where I had joined the University a few weeks before, that I happened to read in the *Modern Review* of October 1921 Tagore's article "The Call of Truth" severely criticising the Non-cooperation movement and Gandhiji's reply to it in the *Young India* of 13 October. Tagore condemned the movement on two grounds—that its plea for a primitive life would arrest the march of civilization, and that it was aiming at the welfare of a single nation, not at that of all mankind. He said :

"If any section of mankind should say the flint was the weapon of our revered forefathers ; by departing from it we destroy the spirit of the race, then they may succeed in preserving what they call their race, but they strike at the root of the glorious tradition of humanity which was theirs also. And we find that those, who have stuck to their flints, may indeed have kept safe their pristine purity to their own satisfaction, but they have been outcasted by the rest of mankind, and so have to pass their lives slinking away in jungles and caves . . . . .

"The awakening of India is a part of the awakening of the world. The door of the New Age has been flung open at the trumpet blast of a great war . . . . . From now onward, any nation which takes an isolated view of its own country will run counter to the spirit of the New Age and know no peace. From now onward, the anxiety that each country has for its own safety must embrace the welfare of the world . . . . .

"In this morning of the world's awakening, if only in our national striving there is no response to its universal aspiration, that will betoken the poverty of our spirit. I do not say for a moment that we should belittle the work immediately to hand. But when the bird is roused by the dawn, all its awakening is not absorbed in its search for food. Its wings respond unweariedly to the call of the sky, its throat sends forth songs for the joy of the new light. Universal humanity

has sent us its call today. Let our mind respond in its own language.”<sup>1</sup>

Gandhiji replied in his inimitable way under the caption “The Great Sentinel”. Here are some extracts :

“I doubt if the steel age is an advance upon the flint age. I am indifferent. It is the evolution of the soul to which the intellect and all our faculties have to be devoted. I have no difficulty in imagining the possibility of a man armoured after the modern style making some lasting and new discovery for mankind, but I have less difficulty in imagining the possibility of a man having nothing but a bit of flint and a nail for lighting his path or his match-lock, ever singing new hymns of praise and delivering to an aching world a message of peace and goodwill upon earth. . . . .

“Our non-cooperation is neither with the English nor with the West. Our non-cooperation is with the system the English have established, with the material civilization and its attendant greed and exploitation of the weak. Our non-cooperation is retirement within ourselves. Our non-cooperation is refusal to cooperate with the English administrators on their own terms. We say to them ‘Come and cooperate with us on our terms, and it will be well for us, for you and the world’. We must refuse to be lifted off our feet. A drowning man cannot save others. In order to be fit to save others, we must try to save ourselves. Indian nationalism is not exclusive, nor aggressive nor destructive. It is health-giving, religious and therefore humanitarian. India must learn to live before she can aspire to die for humanity. . . . .

“True to his poetical instinct the poet lives for the morrow and would have us to do likewise. He presents to our admiring gaze the beautiful picture of the birds early in the morning singing hymns of praise as they soar into the sky. These birds had their day’s food and soared with rested wings in

<sup>1</sup> “The Call of Truth” by Rabindranath Tagore, *Modern Review* Calcutta, October, 1921.

whose veins new blood had flown during the previous night. But I have had the pain of watching birds, who for want of strength could not be coaxed even into a flutter of their wings. The human bird under the Indian sky gets up weaker than when he pretended to retire. For millions it is an eternal vigil or an eternal trance. It is an indescribably painful state which has to be experienced, to be realised. I have found it impossible to soothe suffering patients with a song from Kabir. The hungry millions ask for one poem—invigorating food. They cannot be given it. They must earn it. And they can only earn by the sweat of their brow.”<sup>1</sup>

This was a new voice which made my whole body and soul vibrate. It seemed to go direct to the heart without the mediation of senses or intellect. Three ideas came to my mind—as if in a flash—rather dim at the moment but grown clearer now after one-third of a century. First, that the fundamental truth of life, as experienced by Gandhiji and Tagore, was the same. The difference lay in the intellectual moulds in which they tried to mould it. Tagore’s was the mystic mind which could fly on the wings of intuition, without effort and without resistance, through the vast expanse of time to its destination. Gandhiji’s was the prophetic mind which marches slowly but surely to its goal, fighting and conquering each resisting moment with the weapon of moral action. Secondly, that Gandhi had come “not to separate but to unite”. His nationalism did not mean that India should keep aloof from the rest of mankind but that she should one day give herself up to larger humanity. But he thought it was necessary that before losing herself in others, she should find herself and possess herself. Thirdly, that in moving away from Gandhiji in order to come nearer to Tagore, we young men were deceiving ourselves and trying to escape from life. There was no real contradiction in their teaching. If we loved


<sup>1</sup> “The Great Sentinel” by M. K. Gandhi, *Young India*, Ahmedabad 13 October, 1921.

our country, the human race and the pursuit of Truth, we had to dream with Tagore and realize our dream in action with Gandhiji—to visualize Truth with Tagore and to *live* it with Gandhiji.

So this conflict of loyalties was resolved without much difficulty. The generation of educated Indians passing through their youth after 1920 got their inspiration both from Gandhiji and Tagore. A number of national workers actually lived by turns at Vishwabharati and at Sabarmati or Sewagram Ashram getting their training both from “Gurudev” and “Bapu” and distinguished themselves in national service through their sincerity and efficiency. Many others accepted in principle that New India had to take its moral substance from Gandhiji and its ideal form from Tagore.

About the middle of the twenties a new star appeared on the firmament of national life—Jawaharlal. He was nearer to us, the younger generations of India, than either Tagore or Gandhiji. He thought and felt like us and spoke our language.

Jawaharlal Nehru, like all national workers working for the Indian National Congress in those days, was enthralled by the fascinating personality of Gandhiji, but he had the capacity to think for himself, to form and express his own opinions, and in this he was encouraged by Gandhiji. So in spite of a great deal of agreement and the deepest mutual love, there appeared a divergence of views between Jawaharlal and Gandhiji on many questions, specially on the fundamental question of the scope and object of the National Congress. Gandhiji would have liked to make it primarily an instrument of the moral and spiritual regeneration of India and only secondarily one of her political liberation and economic progress. Jawaharlal and other Congressmen with modern education, wanted the Congress to confine its activities to the political and economic field, though they had accepted the Gandhian principle that it should adopt only those means for achieving its object which were morally pure. Soon Gandhiji realized that his



powerful personality was dominating the Congress and most of its leaders had accepted part of the programme which he had laid down for it, against their conviction, simply out of personal love and reverence for him. So he gradually cut off formal relations with the Congress and finally resigned its membership in 1934.

This did not mean that Gandhiji had turned against the Congress or ceased all cooperation with it. It only meant he had now realized that the Congress could fulfil just one part of his comprehensive and universal mission—that relating to the liberation of India. For the rest, which was to him of much greater importance, he would have to work outside the Congress. So he decided to devote his life to “constructive work” which would bring about a fundamental change in the spiritual and moral consciousness of Indians, and enable the country to place before the world the specimen of a society based on truth and non-violence, which he regarded as necessary for the salvation of mankind. He left the Congress in the safe hands of Jawaharlal and other leaders, assuring them that he would continue to give his help and advice whenever they needed it.

Now, another conflict of loyalties began. Before independence most national workers were conscious of the conflict only to the extent that they found it hard to decide whether they should do political work with Jawaharlal Nehru or constructive work with Gandhiji. But a solution was found. Many of them worked mainly for the Congress Party but gave part of their time to social service undertaken by the various organizations set up by Gandhiji. Orthodox Gandhians devoted themselves solely to constructive work, but whenever the Congress started Civil Disobedience movement, most of them would throw themselves into it heart and soul, specially as it was invariably led by Gandhiji.

When India became independent in 1947 and the first National Government was formed, with Jawaharlal Nehru

at its head, the conflict of loyalties in the minds of national workers took a new and more acute form. The first phase of the war of liberty in which people with different ideas fought shoulder to shoulder against the foreign rule, had come to an end and another phase had begun in which we had to fight against internal foes, ignorance, poverty and social as well as economic inequality. About the aims and methods of this second battle there were, notwithstanding general agreement, important differences between Gandhiji and Jawaharlal Nehru, which were not easy to reconcile. Still Gandhiji was trying to bring about a working understanding and some sort of cooperation between the political workers who, after shouldering the responsibility for the Government of the country, could not go far with him, and the constructive workers who were ready to go all the way. If he had lived a few years longer his "practical sagacity", which was a rare combination of prophetic prescience and statesmanlike prudence, would have found some solution of the problem. But God willed it otherwise. He called Gandhiji to Him and put the whole burden of resolving the mental conflict which national workers had been undergoing since 1947, on their own shoulders.

The position today is that the parties who, forty years ago, were fighting shoulder to shoulder for the freedom of India are split into several factions. Some people who were dissatisfied with the ideas of Gandhiji as well as those of Nehru, at a very early stage, formed themselves into the Communist Party. As the centre of gravity of this party lies outside India, it does not come within the scope of the present discussion. One group, which had originally followed Nehru, worked inside the Congress and tried to convert it to Democratic Socialism was, after Independence, sorely disappointed with the policy of the Congress Government and formed a separate party. This was the Socialist Party which later developed into the Praja Socialist Party. It claims to be following the way shown by Nehru, while Nehru himself,

it asserts, has wandered away from it. A second group which is really the main body of the Congress is now the ruling party under the leadership of Nehru. A third group is that of orthodox Gandhian constructive workers following Vinoba and other associates of Gandhiji. These three groups are going along parallel lines which sometimes appear to converge but never actually meet. All know that this state of things is far from satisfactory and Gandhiji would never have liked it. So in every single mind, in the mind of the country as it were, there is a constant conflict which is delaying if not obstructing our progress.

It would not be quite correct to call the two trends of the Indian mind today, which appear to be in conflict and which we associate with the names of Gandhiji and Jawaharlal, simply Westernism and Easternism or Traditionalism and Modernism, because both Gandhiji and Jawaharlal Nehru regarded Truth to be independent of time and space and tried to assimilate it from every age and every land. But there can be no doubt that the main difference in their philosophies of life is that the proportion of the East and the West or the Old and the New in their make-up is different. So it would not be wrong to explain the basis of difference in their ideas by saying that Gandhiji, while infusing a new spirit into Indian life wanted, on the whole, to preserve its traditional structure, but Jawaharlal wants to change the structure itself in the light of the progress made by the West with the help of modern science and technology.

The question exercising our minds, which this book attempts to answer, is how far the visions of a new life as seen by Gandhiji and Jawaharlal agree with and how far they differ from each other and to what extent the difference can be reconciled. We have divided the discussion into four parts: (1) Gandhi, (2) Nehru, (3) Gandhi or Nehru? (4) Gandhi and Nehru. The first part comprising Chapters I to IV deals with Gandhiji's philosophy of life and the second part comprising Chapters V

to VII with that of Nehru. The third part of the discussion is covered by Chapter VIII showing that the pictures of ideal life drawn by Gandhi and Nehru differ from each other and represent two different aspects of the Indian mind. So each one of us, in determining our individual ideal of life, has to choose one of the two as his guide. In the fourth part, that is the concluding chapter, an attempt has been made to prove that in spite of the divergence between their ultimate social ideals, the compromise plans which they have drawn for the social and economic development of India in the near future are not materially different. So for practical purposes, the way of Gandhi and Nehru is, and will remain for a long time to come, one and the same, and this way we who fought the battle of liberty with Gandhi and Nehru have to follow.

I take this opportunity of expressing my gratitude to Acharya S. J. Bhagwat for his help and guidance in writing the book and to Mr. Mehdi Abbas Husaini for his cooperation in collecting the material.

8 May 1958

S. ABID HUSAIN





## CHAPTER I

### TRUTH AND LOVE

#### *The Bases of Gandhiji's Religious and Moral Ideas*

(I)

GANDHIJI'S whole Philosophy of Life is centred round religion. But his religion is not conventional or traditional. It is an achievement of personal quest, of direct spiritual experience. He was one of the few important persons in the history of the world who did not take their religious inheritance unquestioningly as it came to them, but put it to the test of reason and actual practice and re-interpreted it in the light of their own spiritual and social experience. That is why Gandhiji calls his life devoted to the pursuit and realization of Truth a series of experiments with Truth. So before we undertake a systematic review of Gandhiji's religious ideas, it is necessary to trace their gradual development in intimate relation with life.

The nineteenth century can be regarded as the century of renaissance and reformation of Hinduism in India. The impact of Western culture produced a mental ferment resulting, above all, in a resurgence of the religious impulse such as was seen in South India after the first contact with the Muslim culture more than a thousand years ago, in the religious movement started by the great teachers, Shankaracharya and Ramanuja. The new religious awakening appeared in the form of mixed movements of social and religious reform like the Arya Samaj, the Brahmo Samaj and the Prarthana Samaj, as well as purely mystical movements like that of Shri Ramakrishna Paramhansa. Towards the end of the century, the religious soul of India stirred afresh in the breast of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. The young Mohandas grew up in an atmosphere of deep religious interest created partly by the movements mentioned above and partly by the general cultural, political and social conditions which had given rise to these movements.

But in his childhood and early youth he did not, in spite of an unusually keen religious sense, show any signs of departing from the beaten track of traditional religion with regard to belief or ritual. He belonged like most of his countrymen to the Vishnuite sect of Hinduism. Living in western India, where Jainism is more popular than in any other part of the country, he must have been influenced by it to some extent. But the distinctive feature of his religious consciousness was that he attached the utmost importance to the observance of moral principles, specially, to truthfulness and uprightness. There are many examples of this. Believing in the immaturity of youth that eating meat was a patriotic duty, he resorted to it in spite of physical repulsion and the fear of social disgrace. Even the prompting of his teacher could not tempt him to copy the answers given by his cleverer class-mates at a school examination. The remorse he felt after a childish act of petty pilferage was so great that he could not rest till he had confessed it to his father and gone through the ordeal of seeing the old ailing man, shed tears of anger and sorrow. His sense of duty made him brave the wrath of the whole community by going to England for higher education.

During his stay in England Gandhiji kept the windows of his mind open. He made new religious contacts and received new influences—from Theosophists, Christians and atheists. Theosophists revealed to him the value of the spiritual heritage of India. Specially the two famous writings of Edwin Arnold, *The Song Celestial* (translation of Bhagwad Gita) and *The Light of Asia* (the story of the life of Gautama Buddha), played a significant role in his spiritual development. The Christian religion, in its denominational forms, had no interest for him, but he was deeply influenced by the personality of Christ and his Sermon on the Mount. The first phase of his quest for religious truth was marked by an attempt to harmonize the teachings of the Gita, of Buddha and of Christ as expressed in the Sermon on the Mount. The ideas of the atheists failed to make any impression on him, but he came to have great respect for Bradlaugh, the exponent of atheism in England, on account of his sincerity of purpose and love of mankind.

According to Gandhiji, "For atheists like Bradlaugh, Truth held the same place as God for others". This experience was the seed of Gandhiji's moral religion expressed in the aphorism "Truth is God", which grew into a mighty tree in the course of the next thirty years.

When Gandhiji returned from England with his barrister's diploma, he met in Bombay Rajchandrabhai, a young jeweller, who came nearest to his idea of the religious master, the *Guru*. He was what the Muslim *Sufis* would call "one living with all, yet aloof from all". While running a jeweller's shop he was able to detach his mind completely from things mundane and to plunge into religious discourses dispensing rare pearls of Truth. Gandhiji said about him: "Indeed I put him much higher than Tolstoy in religious perception. Both Rajchandra-bhai and Tolstoy lived as they preached."

Upto this time Gandhiji's religious interest was mainly intellectual and moral. He had not yet had any direct spiritual experience. This came to him in South Africa where he was called soon after his return from England as legal adviser to an Indian business firm. On his way from Durban to Pretoria, he had to suffer great humiliation simply on account of his race. At a railway station, the European conductor bundled him out of a first class compartment as non-Europeans were not allowed to travel in that class. This experience was a novel one even for an Indian used to ill-treatment from his white rulers. (It worked like an earthquake giving a violent shock to Gandhiji's whole emotional structure.) An ordinary man would have been provoked by a sense of personal indignity to take immediate, or plan future, revenge. But it is characteristic of the religious mind that it universalizes individual experience. So the feeling of personal humiliation was transformed in Gandhiji's mind into that of the humiliation of the whole Indian nation, nay, of the entire human race. He felt as if untruth had trampled Truth under its feet. Reverence for human personality was deeply ingrained in Gandhiji. When human dignity was touched, the whole universe shook before his eyes. Replying to Dr. John R. Mott's question about the most creative experience in his life, Gandhiji specially

mentioned this incident as the occasion for the birth of the idea of *Satyagraha* in his mind.

"Such experiences are a multitude. But as you put the question to me I recalled particularly one experience which changed the course of my life—that fell to my lot seven days after I arrived in South Africa. I had gone there on a purely mundane and selfish mission. I was just a boy returned from England to make some money. Suddenly the client who had taken me there asked me to go to Pretoria from Durban. It was not an easy journey. There was the railway journey as far as Charlestown and the coach to Johannesburg. On the train I had a first class ticket but not a bed ticket. At Maritzburg where the beds were issued, the guard came and turned me out and asked me to go to the van compartment. I would not go and the train steamed away leaving me shivering in the cold. Now the creative experience comes here. I was afraid for my very life. I entered the dark waiting-room. There was a white man in the room. I was afraid of him. 'What was my duty?' I asked myself. Should I go back to India, or should I go forward with God as my helper and face whatever was in store for me? 'I decided to stay and suffer.' My active non-violence begins from that date."

Later, he found that the whole Indian community in South Africa was forced to live a pitiable life; specially the poor indentured labourers were treated worse than beasts. So he made the protection of their fundamental human rights the sacred mission of his life. Upto that time Gandhiji had believed that colonial governments had the same respect for the basic principles of law and justice as he had seen in Britain. So he began with seeking through legal channels redress for the great wrong being done to his countrymen and became the legal adviser to the whole Indian community in Natal and Transvaal.

During his stay in South Africa Gandhiji continued his search for religious truth. There he came into close contact with Christian missionaries. The personality of Christ and his Sermon on the Mount had already captivated his heart in London. Now he was, to some extent, inclined towards formal Christian religion. But here one of his first contacts happened

to be with the Plymouth Brethren whose belief that the Martyrdom of Christ could atone for the sins of all Christians, was repugnant to Gandhiji's moral sense. Later contacts with Quakers and other Christians removed this unpleasant impression, but he could not reconcile himself to the missionary Christian creed that there could be no salvation for anybody without embracing Christianity. In Hindu Dharma he found the broadmindedness and tolerance which he sought in religion, but he could not accept untouchability and belief in the divine origin of the Vedas and other scriptures, which were commonly regarded to be essential tenets of the Hindu creed. Among the holy books which he read with great admiration and much profit was the Quran. Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God Is within You* played an important role in shaping his religious ideas. He was also corresponding with Rajchandrabhai who urged him to make a closer study of Hinduism. An occasion for this offered itself when Gandhiji was requested by the Theosophists to help them in understanding the Hindu religion. For this purpose Gandhiji made a thorough study of Bhagwad Gita. It brought him complete conviction, and he made it into a guide for practical life :

"The Gita became an infallible code of conduct for me." What Gandhiji sought in religion was not so much intellectual satisfaction as moral guidance, and this he got from the Bhagwad Gita. It taught him that only through the love and selfless service of one's fellow-beings could one realize Truth. For a time the principle of *Aparigraha* (non-possession) on which the Gita laid so much stress presented a great deal of difficulty. Gandhiji could not see how one could, while living in the world, discard all worldly things. But ultimately he resolved this difficulty with the help of the theory of Trusteeship. He interpreted the words of Gita as permitting private property on the condition that one regarded it as a Public Trust, using only as much of it as was required for one's urgent legitimate need and devoting the rest to the benefit of others.

But deep under the surface of this intellectual inquiry, Gandhiji's religious development was taking place through the direct spiritual experience, which the service of his countrymen

and the fight for their fundamental rights afforded him. It was partly his profound sympathy for Indian labourers and partly the strain which large contributions to national and charitable funds put on his financial resources that led him to adopt a simple mode of living, giving up all luxuries and comforts and confining himself to the barest necessities. Ruskin's book *Unto This Last* which he translated into Gujarati under the title *Sarvodaya* further strengthened this tendency. It taught him that the best life in the world was that of the peasant and the labourer. So he set up an *ashram*, the Phoenix Settlement near Durban, and went to live there with a band of his comrades, who had dedicated themselves to social service. Here all worked for their living at the agricultural farm and the printing press, each receiving a fixed wage of £ 3 a month. As Gandhiji was still trying constitutional ways of protecting the rights of Indians in South Africa, he had to move to the town of Durban and resume his legal practice. But he kept in close touch with Phoenix and tried to live a simple and austere life even in urban surroundings.

For several years Gandhiji had had the feeling that if one wanted to devote oneself solely to the love and service of one's fellow men, one should not only give up the love of worldly possessions, but also curb carnal desire. So he was trying to practice *Brahmacharya*. But in 1906 he made a formal vow never to yield to sexual desire. About this time he had given up all hopes of securing justice from the South African Government by constitutional means. He had realized that the sense of fair play in the minds of most Europeans in South Africa was over-shadowed by class interests and racial prejudices, and he would have to use more effective means to touch their hearts. So he adopted the method of passive resistance and called it *Satyagraha*. At that time he was not conscious of the full spiritual significance of *Satyagraha* and all its implications. But some inkling of these things must have been present in his mind or the name would not have occurred to him. Also the trend towards austerity which had marked his life in the last few years indicated that Gandhiji was unconsciously preparing himself for a spiritual struggle. So the movement which

Gandhiji started in 1907 was not merely the political movement of passive resistance but something deeper than that.

The movement lasted with a few breaks for seven years, and provided an occasion for Gandhiji to make his spiritual and moral ideas clearer by translating them into action. During one of the breaks in the *Satyagraha* movement, he re-visited England. There he came into contact with many Indian patriots and discussed with them not only the problems of Indians in South Africa, but the greater problem of the freedom of India. His thoughts on the latter question he put into a small book, *Hind Swaraj*, in which he offered a new plan for securing India's independence. The experience during his sixteen years' stay in South Africa had led him to the conclusion that the European domination over India and South Africa which had reduced Indians to virtual slavery, was a direct consequence of the growth of modern civilization based on the blind pursuit of material values, the love of power and the use of that power to exploit the weak. If Indians tried to free themselves from this domination by fighting with material weapons they would not succeed and even if they did, the freedom thus achieved would be a false freedom. Those who defeated foreign exploiters by means of material power would themselves use that power to exploit their countrymen, as was happening in Italy and other countries. In order to get true freedom Indians had, according to the *Hind Swaraj*, to free their minds from the sway of modern civilization, to dissociate themselves from all symbols of material progress—the modern machine and its products, the modern means of transport, the modern medicine and the modern system of administration of justice. Even the upper classes had to live the simple life of peasants and labourers. Then alone would they be able to develop the moral and spiritual powers which would help them to achieve physical and mental freedom without the use of force.

To put these ideas in action, Gandhiji set up a settlement of *Satyagrahis* in the rural area near Johannesburg under the name of Tolstoy Farm, in which people of different castes and



creeds—Hindus, Muslims, Parsis, Christians—from different parts of India, who were prepared to work and suffer for their country's honour and the protection of their legitimate rights, lived together. These *Satyagrahis* worked at agriculture and other industries to produce most of what they needed. Some of them had brought their wives and children to live with them. A school was opened for the education of these boys and girls in which Gandhiji himself and some others acted as teachers. The experiments which Gandhiji carried on here and earlier at the school in Phoenix Settlement, played an important role in the development of his ideas. While trying to give common religious education to boys of different denominations, he realized that the essence of the teaching of every religion was the basic moral principles common to all mankind. This was the origin of his idea of moral religion, which he presented in 1912 in a small booklet, *Nitidharma*. At the same time he felt that every religion had grown up in a particular environment; it had become associated with a particular ritual and mode of worship and it was necessary to preserve this outward form as being the most suitable for the spiritual training of its followers. So along with the principles of universal moral religion, every child should be taught and made to follow the tenets of his ancestral religion. In the field of general education, Gandhiji's experiments led him to the conclusion that the main object of education was to create in the child mental awareness and activity, moral discipline and the spirit of cooperation, and the specific means to this end was the teaching of some useful handicraft. }

So the basic outline of Gandhiji's philosophy of life, specially in its religious and moral aspects, of which every single line was drawn in the light of spiritual and practical experience, had already been completed in South Africa. After he came and settled in India, he devoted the last thirty-four years of his life to repeating on a vast scale the experiments for the realization of Truth through the love and service of men, which he had made on a small scale in South Africa. Though most of these experiments were carried on in the political and social fields their object was religious. In the preface to his autobiography

in which Gandhiji has described these experiments upto 1935, he says :

“What I want to achieve—what I have been striving and pining to achieve these thirty years—is self-realization, to see God face to face, to attain Moksha. I live and move and have my being in pursuit of this goal. All that I do by way of speaking and writing, and all my ventures in the political field, are directed to this end.”<sup>1</sup>

Gandhiji's religious consciousness, as we have said before, was in essence not mystic but prophetic; so he did not think that mere introspection was enough for the realization of Truth. He wanted to make social life the field of his search for Truth or God and to lead others along the way of realization and salvation :

“I have all along believed that what is possible for one is possible for all, my experiments have not been conducted in the closet, but in the open.”<sup>2</sup>

No doubt introspection, meditation and communion with God are indispensable means of seeking enlightenment, and Gandhiji did make use of them, but such experiences he regarded as strictly personal which could not be shared with others :

“There are some things which are known only to oneself or one's Maker. These are clearly incommunicable.”<sup>3</sup>

The collective religious or moral (for Gandhiji the two terms are interchangeable) experiments carried on in public were of two kinds—political and social. The political experiment consisted in investing the movement for the freedom of India, which had made considerable headway before Gandhiji entered public life, with a new moral spirit and converting it into the movement of non-violent non-cooperation through which the country became independent of foreign rule within thirty years. The social experiment consisted in trying, with the help of various organizations for constructive work, to set up a non-violent

<sup>1</sup> *An Autobiography or Experiments with Truth*, Navajivan, May 1956, Introduction, p. xii.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.      <sup>3</sup> Ibid.

society based on cooperation instead of competition, free from all exploitation. To prepare the ground for building up such a society, he introduced a new method of education. These experiments carried on for one-third of a century, made the religious and moral ideas which Gandhiji had formed in South Africa clearer, deeper and more comprehensive, but apparently the general outline of his philosophy of life remained the same. Still, if we look deeper into it we find an important change of emphasis which Gandhiji himself has expressed in these words:

"I used to say that though God may be God but God is Truth above all. . . . two years ago, I went a step further and said Truth is God."<sup>1</sup>

The full significance of the words we shall discuss later. Here it would be enough to say that formerly Gandhiji used to think of morality as the most important feature of religious life, but now he had come to regard it as the very essence of religion. Experience had taught him that the consciousness of moral values was something more universal and more definite than belief in God. So he accepted the former as the substance of religion and the latter as an accident, though to him it seemed an inseparable accident. Perhaps this change of emphasis was due to the fact that he met in India people (of whom Jawaharlal Nehru is the most prominent example) who have a firm belief in moral values and scrupulously act on moral principles, but do not formally believe in God; and he felt that the soul of religion was morality which they had in a greater measure than many "religious people".

After a brief review of how Gandhiji's religious and moral ideas took shape through direct spiritual and practical experience, we shall discuss in the following pages the conclusions at which he arrived after a lifetime of search for Truth.

## (2)

The difficulty in presenting Gandhiji's ideas in a systematic

<sup>1</sup> *Young India*, 31 December 1931.

form is due to the fact that he does not usually discuss general principles as such but refers to them in connection with individual practical problems. This method he seems to have adopted for two reasons. First, it was not his object or his province to propound a theoretical philosophy of religion and morality. His philosophy was practical, and in practice only could it find adequate expression. Secondly, this practical philosophy was not deduced from absolute or abstract truths but developed in and through contact with actual life. So Gandhiji did not want to present it to the world in the form of an impersonal religious or moral code but merely as a series of personal experiments, and did not claim for the results at which he had arrived either finality or universal validity:

"Far be it from me to claim any degree of perfection for these experiments. I claim for them nothing more than does a scientist who, though he conducts his experiments with utmost accuracy, forethought and minuteness, never claims any finality about his conclusions, but keeps an open mind regarding them. I have gone through deep introspection, searched myself through and through, and examined and analysed every psychological situation. Yet I am far from claiming any finality or infallibility about my conclusions. One claim I indeed do make and it is this. For me they appear to be absolutely correct, and seem for the time being to be final."<sup>1</sup>

But though Gandhiji's ideas do not possess the formal consistency of a system of philosophy, they have that deeper inner coherence which can only be produced by having a common centre of reference in an organized and integrated personality.

So while admitting that it is not possible to give a systematic exposition of Gandhiji's thought, we can certainly try to give an intelligent outline of his teachings.

There are two special features of Gandhiji's religious creed. Firstly, he regards moral values as the substance and belief in God and other matter of theological import as accidents (though inseparable accidents) of religion. Secondly, he

<sup>1</sup> *An Experiment with Truth*, Introduction, p. xiii.

believes in the essential unity of all religions. These two ideas hang together. Once morality is accepted as the essence of religion, it naturally follows that all religions are one, because they have the same basic moral principles.

The moral law for Gandhiji is the eternal and immutable law of life, which rules the whole universe and is ingrained in human nature. He calls it the Law of Truth and sometimes simply Truth or *Satya*. The term *Satya* is the keystone of the whole structure of Gandhian thought and so we should try to understand as clearly as possible what it means. The nearest English equivalent is Truth. The word Truth is used in two senses: (i) words which correspond to facts, (ii) knowledge which corresponds to reality. But *Satya* has a wider meaning. Besides, true statement of facts and true knowledge, it also connotes goodness, justice, ultimate reality and God, the real subject of all these predicates.

Gandhiji finds the whole universe permeated by a mysterious power whose presence is instinctively felt by man:

"There is an indefinable mysterious power that pervades everything. I feel it, though I do not see it. It is this unseen power that makes itself felt, yet defies proof, because it is so unlike all that I see through my senses. It transcends reason."<sup>1</sup>

This power is the only abiding reality in this world of continuous flux:

"Whilst everything around me is ever changing, ever dying, there is underlying all that change, a living power that is changeless, that holds all together, that creates, dissolves and recreates."<sup>2</sup>

His observation of the working of this power has convinced him that it is a power for good, not for evil:

"And is this power benevolent or malevolent? I see it as purely benevolent; for I can see in the midst of death life persists, in the midst of untruth Truth persists, in the midst of darkness light persists."<sup>3</sup>

It is this power which Gandhiji calls *Satya*, God. He

<sup>1</sup> *Young India*, 11 October 1928.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

conceives it not as a person but as a law which is the law of life, the law of nature, the moral law:✓

"I do not regard God as a person. Truth for me is God, and God's law and God are not different things or facts in the sense that an earthly king and his law are different. He and his law abide everywhere and govern everything."<sup>1</sup>

To conceive ultimate reality as a mysterious and good or evolutionary power, to see in the universe order, harmony and the rule of moral law, and to regard obedience to this law as the guiding principles in individual and social life, is the first essential element of Gandhiji's basic religious creed which he shared not only with the followers of almost all religions but even with many who do not profess any religion. But the difference is that believers in religion call ultimate reality, which they regard identical with moral law, by the name of God, as Gandhiji did, and strive to realize it through love or devotion. While non-believers do not give it any name and try to know it with the help of science. Gandhiji treated all who believed in the moral order as one great brotherhood including those who profess to be atheists. In fact, if atheists happened to be morally superior to theists, he regarded the former as more religious-minded and gave them a higher place in his brotherhood.

But this religious-mindedness, groping for Truth, cannot, according to Gandhiji, succeed in finding it until it realizes that the best way to Truth lies through Love or *Ahimsa*.

"In the early part of my career I discovered that if I was to realize Truth, I must obey even at the cost of my life the Law of Love."<sup>2</sup>

Love or *Ahimsa* (Non-violence) is after Truth the most significant term in the Gandhian philosophy, and has an equally wide range of meaning. It includes the positive connotations of affection, sympathy, mercy, generosity, service and self-sacrifice, and the negative ones of non-violence and non-injury. It also refers to God as the be-all and end-all of Love. Love has the same relation to Truth in Gandhiji's intuitive theory

<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, 23 March 1940.    <sup>2</sup> *Nation's Voice*, p. 219.

of reality as perception has to "idea" in Kant's critical theory of knowledge. That is, they are complementary to each other. As perception gives substance to the bare idea, so does love serve as the solid content of the airy form of truth. Gandhiji's variation of Kant's famous words "Perception without idea is blind and idea without perception empty" was "Love without Truth is blind and Truth without Love empty".

Like Truth, Love is regarded by Gandhiji as a universal first principle on which the very existence of the world depends. It sustains the world as the force of attraction which is greater than the opposite force of repulsion:

"Though there is repulsion enough in Nature, she lives by attraction. Mutual love enables Nature to persist."<sup>1</sup>

Similarly in the organic world the law of amity and peace is stronger than that of hatred and war, or life would not have persisted:

"I have found that life persists in the midst of destruction and, therefore, there must be a higher law than that of destruction."<sup>2</sup>

To observe the working of this law one should study the ripe nature of man not raw nature:

"When an appeal to man is made to study or copy nature, he is not invited to follow what the reptiles do or even what the king of forest does. He has to study man's nature at its best."<sup>3</sup>

So far the human race has, on the whole, followed what Gandhiji calls the law of love or non-violence without being conscious of it:

"I believe that the sum total of the energy of mankind is not to bring us down but to lift us up, and that is the definite unconscious working of the Law of Love."<sup>4</sup>

"Though the social structure is not based on a conscious acceptance of non-violence, all the world over mankind lives . . . . families are bound together by ties of love and so are groups in the so-called civilized society called nations.

<sup>1</sup> *Young India*, 2 March 1922.

<sup>2</sup> *Young India*, 1 October 1931.

<sup>3</sup> *Harijan*, 4 April 1936.

<sup>4</sup> *Young India*, 12 November 1931.

Only they do not recognize the supremacy of the law of non-violence.”<sup>1</sup>

What Gandhiji is striving for is that mankind should consciously recognize and follow this law:

“I have been pleading for the last fifty years for a conscious acceptance of the law and its zealous practice.”

Following this law signifies devoting oneself to the love and service of man as a means of realizing God or Truth:

“Man’s ultimate aim is the realization of God and all his activities, social, political, religious have to be guided by the ultimate aim of the vision of God. The immediate service of all human beings becomes a necessary part of the endeavour simply because the only way to find God is to see Him in His creation and be one with it. This can only be done by the service of all. I am a part and parcel of the whole and I cannot find him apart from the rest of humanity.”<sup>2</sup>

Love or *ahimsa* has, as we remarked before, a positive aspect and a negative aspect. The positive aspect consists in extending the love which one naturally has for one’s near relations to all mankind including one’s personal enemies:

“In its positive form *ahimsa* means the largest love, greatest charity. If I am a follower of *ahimsa*, I must love my enemy. I must apply the same rules to the wrong-doer who is my enemy or a stranger to me as I would to my wrong-doing father or son.”<sup>3</sup>

The negative aspect consists in refraining from deliberately killing or causing pain to any living creature to further one’s self-interest or to satisfy one’s passion:

“*Himsa* means causing pain to or killing any life out of anger or from a selfish purpose or with the intention of injuring it. Refraining from doing so means *ahimsa*.”<sup>4</sup>

The second essential element of Gandhiji’s religious creed was that the comprehensive social virtue which he calls Love

<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, 22 February 1942.      <sup>2</sup> *Harijan*, 29 August 1936.

<sup>3</sup> *Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, Fourth Edition, G. A. Natesan & Co., Madras, p. 346.

<sup>4</sup> *Young India*, 11 November 1926.



is the key to Truth as the highest value of life, or, in other words, the way to God lies through the love and service of men. This idea is also common to all the principal religions of the world. The best examples are the teachings of Christ and those of Muslim *Sufis*.

As the study of several world religions revealed to Gandhiji that they all give the same fundamental importance to Truth and Love, he came to the conclusion that religion is essentially one. The denominational religions are nothing but the image of this one great original religion mirrored in different minds. That is, the same fundamental experience forms the basis of all religions, but it has been variously interpreted in different physical, social or intellectual environments:

"Let me explain what I mean by religion. It is not the *Hindu* religion, which I certainly prize above all other religions, but *religion* which transcends Hinduism, which changes one's very nature, which binds one indissolubly to the Truth within and which ever purifies. It is the permanent element in human nature which counts no cost too great in order to find full expression and which leaves the soul utterly restless until it has found itself, known its Maker and appreciated the true correspondence between itself and its Maker."<sup>1</sup>

"Even as a tree has a single trunk, but many branches and leaves, so there is one perfect religion, but it becomes many as it passes through the human medium."<sup>2</sup>

The idea of the essential unity of all religions is not a new one. It is found in all religious people of the mystic type. Specially in India the saints of the *Bhakti* school and the Muslim *Sufis* have shown in their teachings and their life that they see the same basic truth in all religions. But the logical consistency with which Gandhiji preached this principle and the sincere zeal with which he practised it has hardly any parallel in history. Equal reverence for all faiths is the focal point in his conception of religion:

"I do not like the word tolerance, but could not think of a

<sup>1</sup> *Young India*, 12 May 1920.

<sup>2</sup> From *Yeravada Mandir*, Navajivan Press, p. 55.

better one. Tolerance may imply a gratuitous assumption of the inferiority of other faiths to one's own whereas *ahimsa* teaches us to entertain the respect for the religious faith of others as we accord to our own . . . . looking at all religions with an equal eye, we would not only not hesitate, but would think our duty to blend into our faith every acceptable feature of other faiths."<sup>1</sup>

To sum up, the basic principles of Gandhiji's ethical religion which he regards as the common essence of all religions, are:

- (1) to believe that the Law of Truth and the Law of Love rule the world.
- (2) to try to live in consonance with these laws.
- (3) to see basic unity in and have equal reverence for all religions.

But notwithstanding his firm faith in the unity of religion Gandhiji knew very well that the common religion of mankind was, on the intellectual plane, no more than a set of abstract ideas. To take a concrete form it had to cast itself into the moulds of various positive religions. In Gandhiji's words there is one true and perfect religion "becomes many as it passes through the human medium". Every individual can look at Truth only as reflected in the mirror of some particular faith usually in that of his own traditional religion. So he should make that religion the means of realizing the common ideals of Love and Truth. But he can and must assimilate all that is good in other religions. About his own religious faith Gandhiji says :

"I can no more describe my feeling for Hinduism than for my wife. She moves me as no other woman in the world can. Not that she has no faults. I dare say that she has more than I see myself. But the feeling of an indissoluble bond is there. Even so I feel about Hinduism with all its faults and limitations. Nothing elates me so much as the music of the *Gita* or the

<sup>1</sup> *Vidya Mandir*, p. 55.

*Ramayana* of Tulsidas, the only two books in Hinduism I may be said to know. I know the vice that is going on today in the great Hindu shrines, but I love them in spite of their unspeakable failings. I am a reformer through and through. But my zeal never takes me to the rejection of the essential things in Hinduism.”<sup>1</sup>

But sticking to one’s traditional religion does not, according to Gandhiji, mean that one should take it unquestioningly as one finds it. He asks us to put the whole of it to the test of reason and inner moral sense and to reject or reinterpret any part that is found wanting. He honours the authority of traditional religion as mere corroborative evidence. The real conclusive evidence, according to him, is primarily that of our moral sense and secondarily that of reason:

“I reject any religious doctrine that does not appeal to reason and conflicts with morality. I tolerate unreasonable sentiment when it is not immoral.”<sup>2</sup>

“I would reject all authority if it is in conflict with sober reason or the dictates of the heart. Authority sustains and ennoble the weak when it is the handiwork of reason, but it degrades them when it supplants reason sanctified by the still small voice within.”<sup>3</sup>

So when Gandhiji made Hinduism the means of realizing the universal idea of religion, he did not follow any particular confession, but assimilated the best ideas and principles from the various Hindu sects, which stood his test of morality and reason, interpreting them not in the light of authority and tradition but in that of personal spiritual and practical experience. The results of a lifetime of *Experiments with Truth* he put before the world as reformed Hinduism, quickened by the living inspiration of a good and holy man. The basic principles of Hinduism are, according to Gandhiji, the same as those of the universal human religion:

“It is the good fortune or misfortune of Hinduism that it has no official creed . . . . If I were asked to define Hinduism

<sup>1</sup> *Young India*, 6 October 1921.      <sup>2</sup> *Young India*, 21 September 1920.

<sup>3</sup> *Young India*, 8 December 1920.

I should simply say: search after Truth through non-violent means. A man may not believe in God and still call himself a Hindu."<sup>1</sup>

As regards the current beliefs, which are specific to orthodox Hindus, Gandhiji accepts them subject to his own interpretation:

"I have asserted my claim to be a *Sanatani* Hindu and yet there are things which are commonly done in the name of Hinduism which I disregard. I have no desire to be called a *Sanatani* Hindu or any other if I am not such. It is, therefore, necessary for me once for all to give my meaning of *Sanatani* Hinduism. The word *Sanatani* I use in the natural sense.

"I call myself a *Sanatani* Hindu because:

- (1) I believe in the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Puranas and all that goes by the name of Hindu scriptures, and therefore in *avatars* and rebirth.<sup>2</sup>
- (2) I believe in the *varnashrama dharma* in a sense, in my opinion strictly Vedic, but not its present popular and crude sense.
- (3) I believe in the protection of the cow in its much larger sense than the popular.
- (4) I do not disbelieve in idol-worship."<sup>3</sup>

Let us now look at the qualifications with which Gandhiji accepts these things:

"The reader will note that I have purposely refrained from using the word divine origin in reference to the Vedas or any other scriptures. For I do not believe in the exclusive divinity of the Vedas. I believe in the Bible, the Quran, the Zend Avesta to be as divinely inspired as the Vedas. My belief in the Hindu scriptures does not require me to accept every word and every verse as divinely inspired."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Young India*, 24 April 1924.

<sup>2</sup> Here Gandhiji forgot to mention two important tenets of *Sanatan Dharma* viz., *Karma* and *Moksha*, but it is obvious from his writings that he believed in them.

<sup>3</sup> *Young India*, 6 October 1921.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

To Gandhiji these scriptures appear to be records of the experiences of saints and sages which can guide us in the search for Truth provided we assimilate them so thoroughly that they become our own personal experiences. This requires a particular spiritual mood and religious frame of mind possible to those only who have prepared and purified themselves by practising Truth, Love, *Brahmacharya* (self-control) and *Aprigraha* (non-possession).

"I believe implicitly in the Hindu aphorism that no one truly knows *shastras* who has not attained perfection in Innocence (*Ahimsa*), Truth (*Satya*) and self-control (*Brahmacharya*) and who has not renounced all acquisition and possession of wealth."<sup>1</sup>

It means that in Gandhiji's conception of Hinduism the importance of the four moral principles *Satya*, *Ahimsa*, *Brahmacharya*, and *Aprigraha* is primary and absolute while that of the belief in and studying of the holy books i.e., the *Vedas* and *Srutis* and the *Smritis* is secondary and relative.

Similarly he assigns a secondary position to other tenets of the *Sanatan Dharma* in his scale of religious values. The love of the cow Gandhiji regards as a symbol of affection for all poor dumb creatures; image-worship as a symbol of reverence for the Divine Beings whom they are meant to represent. The belief in *avatars* he takes in a metaphorical sense and the *varnashrama* in the sense which it had in the Vedic period when it was not a rigid caste system but a social organization based on the division of labour.

The rational interpretation of the popular creed of Hinduism was not peculiar to Gandhiji. Enlightened Hindu leaders had done it before him. But Gandhiji played a great role in the popularization of progressive ideas through his precept, example and practical campaigns of reform. Specially he displayed a crusader's zeal in trying to do away with caste distinctions, produced by the misinterpretation of *varnashrama*, seen at their worst in the deplorable practice of untouchability. He fought and overcame the mighty forces of orthodoxy and

<sup>1</sup> *Young India*, 6 October 1921.

conservatism which struggled to defend it. But the special feature of Gandhiji's interpretation was his re-valuation of Hindu religious values. In the vast store-house of the traditions of Hindu religion dogmatic doctrines like those of *avatars*, *punarjanma*, *varnashrama*, *gorakhsha* and image-worship, existed side by side with moral principles like *Satya*, *Ahimsa*, *Brahmacharya* and *Aparigraha*. The conventional creed regarded the former, the dogmatic elements, as the substance of Hinduism and the latter or moral elements as more or less accidental. Gandhiji simply reversed the position and emphasized the four moral principles as the essential core of Hinduism. Similarly, there had always been a sentiment among the Hindus of respect for religions other than their own. But Gandhiji elevated it into a fundamental principle that all religions partake of the Truth so that Hindus should, while sticking to their own religion, have an equal reverence for other religions and should "blend into our faith all the acceptable features of other faiths". He condemns efforts to convert non-Hindus to Hinduism. Even if somebody wanted, of his own accord, to become a Hindu, he would try to persuade him to assimilate all the good he finds in Hinduism without renouncing his own religion. This large-heartedness he regards as the special feature of the Hindu *Dharma* which distinguishes it from all other religions:

"Not being an exclusive religion it enables the followers of that faith not merely to respect all other religions, but it also enables them to admire and assimilate what may be good in other faiths."<sup>1</sup>

"Hinduism is not an exclusive religion. In it there is room for worship of all the prophets of the world. It is not a missionary religion in the ordinary sense of the term. It has no doubt absorbed many tribes in its fold, but this absorption has been of an evolutionary imperceptible character. Hinduism tells everyone to worship God according to his own faith or *Dharma* and so it lives at peace with all the religions."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Hindu Dharma*, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Young India*, 6 October 1921.



## (3)

The word *Satya*, as we remarked before, has four connotations in Gandhiji's writings.

(a) Absolute Reality, Absolute Being or God:

"The word *Satya* is derived from *sat* which means 'being'. Nothing is or exists except reality. That is why *Sat* or Truth is perhaps the most important name of God."<sup>1</sup>

(b) The knowledge of Truth, Absolute knowledge which is eternal bliss:

"Where there is Truth, there is also knowledge which is true. Where there is no Truth, there can be no true knowledge. That is why the word *chit* or knowledge is associated with the name of God."<sup>2</sup>

The process of true knowledge, that is, God, is free from all pain because pain is really caused by ignorance, imperfection, impermanence. Perfect freedom from pain is the ineffable state of pure happiness called 'bliss':

"Where there is true knowledge, there is always bliss. There sorrow has no place. And even as Truth is eternal so is the bliss derived from it. Hence we know God as *Sat-Chit-Ananda*—one who combines in Himself Truth, knowledge and bliss."<sup>3</sup>

(c) Truthfulness, speaking and thinking what is true which Gandhiji calls "truth in word and thought".

(d) Righteousness, doing what is just and upright or in Gandhiji's words "truth in action". This implies the observance of the whole Moral Law which Gandhiji calls the Law of Truth.

When Gandhiji speaks of "the pursuit and attempted practice of Truth" as the object of religion and morality, he is thinking of all the four meanings of the word "truth" that is Reality, and the knowledge of Reality which the seeker has to pursue and truthfulness and righteousness which he has to practise.

<sup>1</sup> From *Yeravada Mandir*, Navajivan Press, Ahmedabad, Second Edition, 1935.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.      <sup>3</sup> Ibid.



Of these four aspects of Gandhiji's conception of Truth, truthfulness and righteousness are the means through which we can attain the highest object, namely, the knowledge or realization of Absolute Reality. Now the question arises: Why does Gandhiji use the same word '*Satya*' for both the means and the ends which can and does cause confusion in the minds of his readers? The answer is, he calls them by the same name because he thinks they are the same. The identity of means and ends, to which we have already referred, is the focal point of his moral theory and has its roots in the metaphysical idea of God. This idea has been explained by Prof. Dharendra Mohan Dutt in the following words:

"God for him was all pervasive Reality, immanent in man and also the world, which he regarded as His manifestation and creation. But unlike an ordinary pantheist, he believed that God was also transcendent. He is in the world as well as beyond it. He is not expressed fully in his creation—just as a poet is not by his poems."<sup>1</sup>

It means that according to Gandhiji Absolute Reality or God, who is the object of our search, has two modes of existence—one coinciding with the world of Nature and the true nature of man himself, and the other transcending it. So when a man observes truthfulness or righteousness, it is a means to the realization of the transcendent mode of Divine Reality. But at the same time this truthfulness or righteousness is the expression of the true nature of man and a manifestation of the immanent mode of the same Reality, and as such it is an end in itself. That is why Gandhiji regards the means and the end of moral conduct as one, using the same word *Satya* or Truth for both. It also explains the great emphasis which is laid on the purity of means in Gandhiji's moral philosophy. As a matter of fact it makes no distinction between means and end:

"Means and ends are convertible terms in my philosophy of life."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi*, p. 28, Madison, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1953.

<sup>2</sup> *Young India*, 26 December 1924.

"They say 'means are after all means'. I would say means are after all everything. As the means so the end. There is no wall of separation between means and end."<sup>1</sup>

In another place Gandhiji has referred to "end as the last of a series of means" which obviously implies that means and end have the same essential nature. Every step taken towards the end is a partial realization of the end. It is a mere convention that the last step is called the end and all the preceding steps means. This theory throws a new light on the doctrine of disinterested action taught by the Gita. If right action is in itself partial realization of Truth which is our ultimate end, why should we worry about the result of our actions?

(4)

But it is not easy to realize Truth. Even those who devote themselves wholeheartedly to its pursuit get only a partial and imperfect view of it. The reason is that our attachment to the body, which implies being swayed by emotions and desires, obscures our vision so that we cannot look objectively at things, and Truth remains hidden from us:

"It is impossible for us to realize perfect Truth so long as we are imprisoned in the mortal frame."<sup>2</sup>

So the seeker after Truth was in need of a force which would help him in subduing his emotions and desires and in freeing him gradually from the bonds of attachment "to the mortal frame". This force he found in *ahimsa*:

"It appears that the impossibility of full realization of the Truth in this mortal body led some ancient seeker after Truth to the appreciation of *ahimsa*."<sup>3</sup>

This was not any external force but one that existed within man himself. It was the same "eternal law of our species" mightier than "the law of destruction" which in its positive aspect Gandhiji calls the "law of love" and in its negative aspect "the law of non-violence".

<sup>1</sup> *Young India*, 17 July 1924.

<sup>2</sup> From *Yeravada Mandir*.      <sup>3</sup> *Ibid*.

Gandhiji has an interesting theory about how "the ancient seeker after Truth" discovered *ahimsa*, which obviously reflects his own personal experience. The seeker, in his pursuit of Truth in action was confronted with situations where he found the forces of untruth and injustice blocking his way. He asked himself how he should meet them. Experience taught him that by destroying his opponents through violence, he can achieve only a seeming victory. In reality, he loses the battle because his spiritual growth is checked and his pursuit of Truth is not made easier but more difficult. Individuals whom he regards as his opponents are mere instruments of forces of evil. His real opponents are those forces which exist, to some extent, in every man including himself. In fighting the supposed external enemies he forgets the real enemy within himself :

"The first act of destruction taught him that the Truth which was the object of his quest was not outside himself but within. Hence the more he took to violence, the more he receded from Truth. For in fighting the imagined enemy without he neglected the enemy within."<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, if he treats the external enemies with sympathy and love as victims of evil forces, but fights and overcomes internal enemies that is, his own violent passions, his personality acquires a poise and his vision a clarity which enables him to see Truth unveiled before him :

"This is the path of *ahimsa*. It may entail continuous suffering and cultivation of endless patience. Thus step by step we learn how to make friends with all the world; we realize the greatness of God—of Truth. Our peace of mind increases in spite of suffering; we become braver and more enterprising; we understand more clearly the difference between what is everlasting and what is not; we learn to distinguish between what is our duty and what is not."<sup>2</sup>

Now the seeker can march forward on the path of Truth and, through the magic influence of his personality, convert others and carry them along with himself. Gandhiji's faith in

<sup>1</sup> From *Yeravada Mandir*.      <sup>2</sup> Ibid.

the miraculous power of *ahimsa* was so great that he regarded it as an effective instrument not only for reforming individuals, but also for fighting social injustice, winning political freedom, maintaining law and order and even for defending the country against foreign aggression.

Among the internal enemies obstructing the pursuit of Truth the most powerful are these two—carnal lust and craving for possession. They have an unlimited capacity for expansion. Unless ruthlessly put down they can dominate the whole personality of man, disturb his mental poise, vitiate his judgment and cloud his vision. So in the pursuit of Truth he must use the force of Love, generally to tame violent passions and specially to control the sexual and possessive instincts, by observing *Brahmacharya* and *Aparigraha*.

*Brahmacharya* and *Aparigraha* occupied an important place in the traditional Hindu religion. The life of every Hindu had to pass through four stages. He had to live by turns as a *Brahmachari* (celibate student), a *grahasta* (married householder), a *vanaprastha* (hermit living in seclusion) and a *sannyasi* (roving mendicant). Through all these stages except the second, he had to observe *Brahmacharya* and *Aparigraha*. Gandhiji does not seem to attach much importance to the idea of dividing life into separate stages. To him the whole life of man is a continuous journey in search of Truth and this search has to be carried on through love and service of his fellowmen. So, complete renunciation is not possible or desirable at any time, but non-attachment is necessary at all times. Everyone, even a *grahasta*, has to be something of a *Brahmachari*, a *vanaprastha* and a *sannyasi* at every moment. But this would not be possible unless the rigorous conditions for *Brahmacharya* and *Aparigraha* are relaxed to some extent. Gandhiji has done so, but more in the case of the latter than that of the former for reasons which we shall see later.

### (5)

About *Brahmacharya*, there is a common notion that it simply means the control of sexual desire. Gandhiji wants,

st of all, to remove this misunderstanding. He lays great emphasis on the theory, based on his personal experience, that it is not possible to check sexual appetite unless all other sensual appetites, specially that of the palate, are kept under control. So he has made it into a general maxim that sensual desires should not be indulged in simply for the sake of pleasure but only when they serve some higher purpose. So food should be taken for preserving life and promoting health and not for pleasing the palate. Similarly, sexual desire may legitimately be satisfied for the purpose of having children, not for physical pleasure. People who do not want children should not marry at all. Those wanting children may marry, but sexual intercourse between husband and wife should be limited to the fewest occasions till the desired number of children is completed. If possible it should occur only once in a lifetime:

"He who does not want a child need not marry at all—the sexual act is permitted only when there is a clear desire for the child—such union may only be once in a life-time if no other child is desired."<sup>1</sup>

Generally husband and wife should live as comrades, free from the taint of selfish desire. This most difficult ideal, which Gandhiji himself could achieve only when he was thirty-five, is regarded to be attainable even by young men and proceeds to discuss practical steps to do so.

(6)

The ideal of *Aparigraha*, as Gandhiji conceives it, is even more difficult as it does not allow for the possession of any property whatsoever. In the present state of society it is not possible for anybody except a few persons to attain it. Still, Gandhiji urges upon all who aspire to realize Truth not to lose sight of the ideal and try to limit their possessions to the barest minimum:

"Perfect fulfilment of the ideal of Non-possession requires that man should, like birds have no roof over his head, no

<sup>1</sup> M. K. Gandhi, *Self-restraint versus Self-indulgence*, p. 192.

clothing and no stock of food for the morrow . . . . . only the fewest possible, if any at all, can reach this ideal. We ordinary seekers may not be repelled by the seeming impossibility. But we must keep the ideal constantly in view and in the light thereof critically examine our possessions and reduce them.”<sup>1</sup>

In order to understand the importance of *Brahmacharya* and *Aparigraha* in Gandhiji’s religious and moral philosophy, it is necessary to keep two things in view.

Firstly, Gandhiji believed, like many other educated Hindus, in the Vedantic doctrine of Unitism, which led to the corollary that all men being parts of one universal Existence are essentially one. So each individual who wants to realize his true self must regard the good of all as his own good and dedicate himself to the service of all. But sensual pleasure and personal possession act as blinds to shut off the light of reason and in his ignorance and selfishness he loses sight of the great Truth of unity. So the discarding of carnal pleasures and worldly goods is, according to Gandhiji, a necessary step in the direction of the realization of Truth.

Secondly, his fundamental spiritual experience, which changed the whole trend of his life, had convinced him that human suffering was the greatest reality in the world. He did not agree with those interpreters of the Vedanta who, like Shankaracharya, regarded this life and this world as unreal. It was this compelling consciousness of the reality of pain and suffering which had led him to concede at least some degree of reality to the world.

“Joy or what men call happiness may be, as it really is, a dream in a fleeting or transitory world. But we cannot dismiss the suffering of our fellow-creatures as unreal and thus provide a moral *alibi* for ourselves. Even dreams are true while they last, and to the sufferer his suffering is a grim reality.”<sup>2</sup>

And just as the consciousness of human suffering was Gandhiji’s basic experience, his basic resolve was to put an end to this suffering. “To wipe every tear from every eye was the great object to which he had dedicated his life.” This was

<sup>1</sup> From *Yeravada Mandir*.

<sup>2</sup> *Harijan*, 21 July 1946.

the idea dominating the whole of his mind, the motive underlying all his action. In fact, all his religious and moral teaching was the rationalization or intellectual interpretation of this inner urge. He wanted everybody to concentrate upon the love and service of his fellowmen. He knew that there were three kinds of distraction which made such concentration impossible:

- (1) Violent passions like hatred, revenge etc.
- (2) sensual appetites, specially sex.
- (3) desire of acquisition and possession.

He also discovered that by getting rid of these distractions through *Ahimsa*, *Brahmacharya* and *Aparigraha* we can release in ourselves the forces of love and service which are the only means of the realization of Truth, of salvation. Other means like prayer and fasting which traditional religion emphasizes are also important from Gandhiji's point of view, but without the spirit of service they have no meaning, no efficiency.

Seen in this light Gandhiji's insistence on controlling of, or rather abstaining from sex, is understandable. This instinct, which psychology regards as a social one, is in Gandhiji's estimate unsocial or even anti-social, as it usurps our love to which all men are entitled and gives it exclusively to one person. So he forbids marriage to the devoted seekers after Love and Truth. To others he allows it conditionally:

"If a man gives his love to one woman or a woman to one man, what is there left for all the world besides . . . . As a faithful wife must be prepared to sacrifice her all for the sake of her husband, and a faithful husband for the sake of his wife, it is clear that such persons cannot rise to the height of Universal Love or look upon mankind as Kith and Kin. For they have created a boundary wall round their love."<sup>1</sup>

As for possessions, Gandhiji thought that anything beyond one's immediate necessities would, if kept simply from selfish motives, certainly prove an obstacle in the way of love and

<sup>1</sup> From *Yeravada Mandir*.

service. But as there was a possibility of a person keeping what was in excess of his needs, as a trustee, to use for the benefit of others, Gandhiji did not indiscriminately condemn all possessions. Still he made it quite clear that the selfish use of one's possessions, as it existed in our society, was absolutely unlawful and should be regarded as a form of stealing:

"I suggest that we are all thieves in a way. If I take anything I do not need for my own immediate use, and keep it, I thief it from somebody else. I venture to suggest that it is the fundamental law of Nature without exception that Nature produces enough for our wants from day to day and if only everybody took enough for himself and nothing more, there would be no man dying of starvation in this world. But so long as we have got this inequality, so long we are thieving."<sup>1</sup>

(7)

Besides selfish use of our possessions there is, according to Gandhiji, another kind of theft which impedes our way to Truth, namely enjoying the product of other people's labour without contributing to it something produced by our own manual labour. So the fifth fundamental principle of Gandhiji's religious and moral code is that everybody whose vocation does not consist in manual work, should regularly put in some amount of Bread-Labour i.e., productive manual work to earn the right to his bread.

Some people have the mistaken notion that Gandhiji's emphasis on spinning was due merely to political and economic reasons. But the fact is that he had already adopted Bread-Labour as a purely religious and moral principle in South Africa. On coming to India, however, he chose spinning as the best form of Bread-Labour. This had no doubt its political and economic implications. But the main motive was still religious and moral. As Gandhiji himself said, he took this

<sup>1</sup> *Speeches and Writings of M. K. Gandhi*, G. A. Natesan & Co., Madras, Fourth Edition, p. 384.



idea first from Tolstoy and Ruskin, but later, when he discovered it in Bhagwad Gita, his faith in it was further strengthened:

"The law that to live one must work, first came to me upon reading Tolstoy's writing on Bread-Labour. But even before that I had begun to pay homage to it after reading Ruskin's *Unto This Last*. The divine law that man must earn his bread by labouring with his own hands, was first stressed by a writer named T.M. Bondaref. Tolstoy advertised it, and gave it wider publicity. In my view, the same principle has been set forth in the third chapter of the Gita, where we are told that he who eats without offering sacrifice, eats stolen food. Sacrifice here can only mean Bread-Labour."<sup>1</sup>

The verse of the Gita, to which reference is made here, was thus paraphrased by Edwin Arnold in his translation of the Gita:

"But if one eats Fruits of the earth, rendering to  
kindly Heaven  
No gift of toil, that thief steals from his world."

In addition to this, Gandhiji has mentioned two other tenets of the Hindu Dharma necessary for achieving the ideals of Love and Truth—*asteya*, that is, refraining from theft and exploitation, and *abhaya*, fearlessness. The great emphasis put by Gandhiji on fearing none but God is not found in the teachings of any other religion except Islam :

"Fearlessness is indispensable for the growth of other noble qualities. How can one seek Truth or cherish Truth without fearlessness."<sup>2</sup>

In this chapter we have given a brief outline of Gandhiji's religious and moral ideas, so far as they are concerned with the spiritual discipline of the individual. But, as we said before, Gandhiji's mind was not essentially mystic but prophetic. He wanted to realize religious and moral values not only in

<sup>1</sup> *Yeravada Mandir*, p. 50.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 40.

individual but also in social life. So the picture of his conception of religion and morality is not yet complete. It will be completed in the next chapter where we shall give his idea of society based on *Satya* and *Ahimsa*—Truth and Love.

## CHAPTER II

### RAMRAJYA

#### *Gandhiji's Social Ideal—Stateless Society Based on Truth and Love*

AS GANDHIJI'S religious consciousness was more prophetic than mystic, he did not put so much reliance upon the fitful flashes of intuition for finding his way to Truth as upon the steady light of reason disciplined through morality. But morality for him was not an impersonal rigid law like Kant's Categorical Imperative, but the Law of Love, expressing itself in the love and service of mankind. Thus the search for Truth took him along the paths of religion and morality to the field of social service:

✓“Man's ultimate aim is the realization of God and all his activities, social, political, religious, have to be guided by the ultimate aim of the vision of God. The immediate service of all human beings becomes a necessary part of his endeavour, simply because the only way to find God is to see Him in His creation and be one with it. This can only be done by the service of all.”<sup>1</sup> ✓

Those he was destined to serve, in the first instance, happened to be the Indian people whom internal discord and moral degradation had condemned to political subjection and subjection, in its turn, to poverty. He felt that in order to raise them morally, economically and spiritually it was necessary to infuse in them—specially in the depressed and backward classes—the spirit of self-respect and self-reliance, and this could only be done by encouraging them to carry on a non-violent struggle for their social, economic and political rights against their exploiters—foreign and Indian. So he had to take up the cause of social justice and political freedom along with that of social service and reform:

<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, 29 August 1936.

"I am but a humble seeker after Truth and bent upon finding it. I count no sacrifice too great for the sake of seeing God face to face. The whole of my activity whether it may be called social, political, humanitarian or ethical is directed to that end. And as I know that God is found more often in the lowliest of his creatures than in the high and mighty, I am struggling to reach the status of these. I cannot do so without their service. Hence my passion for the service of the suppressed classes. And as I cannot render this service without entering politics, I find myself in them."<sup>1</sup>

This means that Gandhiji's interest in social and political problems was not spontaneous but was induced by a purely religious motive. A good society or state is for him, not an end in itself, but a means to the ultimate object, which he calls the realization of Truth or God or salvation (Moksha). These words may lead some people to think that his interest in politics could not be very keen or deep. But as a matter of fact, whenever he occupied himself with politics he did so with an ardent zeal as if it were an act of devotion. And it is not surprising, because in his moral philosophy means are no less important than ends, as he does not regard the means to be something external to the end but an essential part of it. Political activity, based on truth and non-violence, is to him a stage in the realization of Truth itself.

Thus it is necessary for understanding Gandhiji's social ideals to look at them against their religious background. We have referred in the last chapter to the fundamental experience in South Africa which determined the whole course of his future life. The humiliation to which he was subjected simply because he was an Indian was felt by him as an outrage upon human freedom and dignity. This shows that his basic social and political conception, closely related to his central religious ideas, was that of the greatness of human personality, the sanctity of its freedom and dignity. His social ideal was to provide for every individual, in addition to a modicum of physical comfort, the greatest freedom and opportunity for the

<sup>1</sup> *Young India*, 11 September 1924.

full development of his personality, for self-expression and self-realization which is the realization of God: "The end to be sought is human happiness combined with social and moral growth. I use the adjective moral as synonymous with spiritual."<sup>1</sup>

But the full intellectual and moral or spiritual development of man is possible only in a society in which the individual enjoys greatest freedom and greatest respect. All men have been created by God and have in them a spark of His divinity. So all are equally worthy of respect. The humiliation of a single individual is the humiliation of all God's creation:

"We are all . . . . . Children of one and the same Creator, and as such the divine powers in us are infinite. To slight a single human being is to slight those divine powers and thus to harm not only that being but the whole universe."<sup>2</sup>

To ensure the maximum freedom and dignity of the individual it is necessary to build human society on the basis of Truth and Love, free from all social injustice and economic exploitation—free from violence in any shape or form. Of this society Gandhiji has not given us a clear or complete picture. Nor could he be expected to do so. 'He was not a social or political theorist but a moral and spiritual reformer.' The task he had set for himself was not to propound any elaborate theory of ideal society, but to let individual men have an enchanting glimpse of it and to prepare them for it through self-purification and self-culture:

"I have purposely refrained from dealing with the nature of Government in a society based on non-violence. . . . . When society is deliberately constructed in accordance with the law of non-violence, its structure will be different in material particulars from what it is today. But I cannot say in advance what the Government wholly based on non-violence will be like."<sup>3</sup>

So according to his principle "take care of the means and the end will take care of itself", Gandhiji has contented himself

<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, 18 January 1942.

<sup>2</sup> *Harijan*, 11 February 1939.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

with brief references, here and there, to the nature of his ideal society, but he has discussed more fully and elaborately the means through which he wanted to train the people of India and other countries for the non-violent struggle to achieve this end. These means are, as we shall see later, New Education, Constructive Programme and *Satyagraha*. Still the occasional brief references in Gandhiji's writings to true Swarajya or Ramrajya do give us a faint outline of his ideal society. The first point which must be emphasized here is that, though in Gandhiji's basic political conception the individual has priority over society, it does not mean that he has failed to appreciate the importance of the social factor. The moral and spiritual development of the individual is no doubt the highest political value, but it can only be realized in society through the love and service of his fellow-men. Individual freedom, though supremely sacred, cannot be accepted without limits. It has to be limited by the freedom and welfare of others :

"I value individual freedom but you must not forget that man is essentially a social being. He has risen to the present status by learning to adjust his individualism to the requirements of social progress. Unrestricted individualism is the law of the beast of the jungle. We have learnt to strike the mean between individual freedom and social restraint. Willing submission to social restraint for the sake of the well-being of the whole society, enriches both the individual and the society of which he is a member."<sup>1</sup>

Political philosophy has generally expressed individual freedom in terms of fundamental rights. Gandhiji's ideas on this subject are characteristic of the religious mind. He believes in only one fundamental right, "the right of full intellectual and moral (i.e. spiritual) development".<sup>2</sup>

This development, according to Gandhiji, is possible only when one devotes oneself to the service of one's fellow-men, or in other words, fulfils the duty one owes to society. This is why he says that the sole fundamental right of man is to get full opportunity to do his duty. All other rights accrue from

<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, 27 May 1939.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

the performance of duties. If every individual can express and realize himself through the service of others, we shall soon have a society in which it will not be necessary for anybody to ask for his rights as he will get them without asking. But if people neglect their duties and insist on their rights it will never lead to conditions favourable to social justice:

"The true source of rights is duty. If we all discharge our duties, rights will not be far to seek. If leaving duties unperformed, we run after rights, they will escape us like the will-o'-the-wisp—The more we pursue them, the further they will fly. The same teaching has been embodied by Krishna in the immortal words 'Action alone is thine; leave thou the fruit severely alone'. Action is duty, fruit is the right."<sup>1</sup>

So the ideal society of Gandhiji's conception is one in which the individual can freely develop his moral or spiritual nature. There are no restrictions from the outside to hamper his self-expression and self-realization, but all the restraint that is necessary is exercised from within by his own conscience or moral sense. It can be visualized only as a decentralized society consisting of small self-governing units. Large centralized society or state cannot possibly maintain itself without the use of force which is incompatible with Gandhiji's idea of non-violence:

"The end to be sought is human happiness combined with full mental and moral growth. This end can be achieved under decentralization. Centralization as a system is inconsistent with the non-violent structure of society."<sup>2</sup>

A small unit in a decentralized society is like a family in which the individual feels that he is surrounded with the warmth and love of living beings. The big centralized society or state is a giant soulless body which binds man to itself, not with the silken cord of love but the iron chain of law:

"The state represents violence in a concentrated and organized form. The individual has a soul, but as the state is a soulless machine, it can never be weaned from violence to

<sup>1</sup> *Young India*, 8 January 1925.

<sup>2</sup> *Harijan*, 8 January 1942.

which it owes its very existence.”<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, Gandhiji does not approve of state in any shape or form. Rejecting all types of states existing today in Western countries, he has put before India the ideal of “Ramrajya”. As we said before, he does not seem to have had a complete picture of it in his mind. But one thing is quite clear. His Ramrajya is perfect anarchy, a stateless society which is governed by no other law except the moral law implicit in human nature, by no other force except the force of love:

“They<sup>2</sup> have systems suitable to their genius. We must have ours suited to ours. What that can be, is more than I can tell. I have described it as Ramrajya i.e. sovereignty of the people based on pure moral authority.”<sup>3</sup>

“Political power means capacity to regulate national life through national representatives. If national life becomes so perfect as to become self-regulated, no representation becomes necessary. There is then a state of *enlightened anarchy*. In such a state every one is his own ruler. He rules himself in such a manner that he is never a hindrance to his neighbour. In the ideal state, therefore, there is no political power because there is no state.”<sup>4</sup>

The power which is sufficient to maintain peace and order in this non-violent stateless society, is the force of love or soul-force used in the form of *Satyagraha*. *Satyagraha* is regarded by Gandhiji to be an effective instrument for resisting oppression or exploitation of an individual by another individual, of a class by another class, of a nation by another nation. Its subtle influence awakens the dormant feeling of love in the heart of the oppressor who is moved without any external pressure, through the prompting of his own higher nature to act with justice, even with generosity. After a great deal of thought and experiment he succeeded in evolving a whole technique of *Satyagraha*, which we shall briefly indicate later.

<sup>1</sup> “Interview with Prof. Nirmal Kumar Bose”, *Modern Review*, October 1935.

<sup>2</sup> i.e., Western States.

<sup>3</sup> *Harijan*, 2 January 1937.

<sup>4</sup> *Young India*, 2 July 1931.



In the ideal society of Gandhiji, where every individual has the same intrinsic value, social equality will naturally be added to political equality. There will be no distinction of caste or class in the sense of regarding some people as higher than, or superior to, others on account of their birth or occupation. But the variety of *varnas* based on inherited aptitudes will continue, because it is derived from the healthy principle of division of labour:

"I regard *Varnashram* as a healthy division of work based on birth. The present ideas of caste are a perversion of the original. There is no question with me of superiority or inferiority. It is purely a question of duty."<sup>1</sup>

"I believe that everybody is born in the world with certain natural tendencies. Every person is born with certain definite limitations which he cannot overcome. From a careful observation of these limitations the law of *varna* was deduced. It establishes certain spheres of action for certain people with certain tendencies."<sup>2</sup>

"Children inherit the qualities of parents no less than their physical features. Environment does play an important part but the original capital on which a child starts its life, is inherited from its ancestors."<sup>3</sup>

Believing in *Varnashram* in this restricted sense, Gandhiji went on loosening the chains of caste until it ceased to be a limiting or cramping force. Not only did he insist on absolute social and economic equality of all castes, but he envisaged the possibility of a man passing from one caste to another more suited to his temperament and capacity. So that *Varnashram* is, in the last analysis, no more than a theory that every child has a natural capacity for his hereditary occupation, and should take it up, unless he discovers in himself an exceptional aptitude for another:

"I want to bring about an equalisation of status. . . . I want to allow no differentiation between the son of a weaver, of an agriculturist, of a schoolmaster."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Young India*, 23 April 1945.

<sup>2</sup> *Modern Review*, October 1935.

<sup>3</sup> *Experiments with Truth*, p. 381.

<sup>4</sup> *Harijan*, 15 January 1938.

"Birth while it gives start and enables the parents to determine the training and occupation of their children, does not perpetuate the *varna* of one's birth if it is not fulfilled by works."<sup>1</sup>

"I have indeed stated that *varna* is based on birth. But I have also said that it is possible for a *shudra* for instance to become a *vaishya*."<sup>2</sup>

"Gandhiji had no doubt that if India was to live an exemplary life of independence which will be the envy of the world, all the *bhangis*, doctors, lawyers, merchants and others would get the same wages for an honest day's work."<sup>3</sup>

The last quotation is a link between Gandhiji's social and economic ideas. He seems to accept economic equality as a necessary corollary of the moral principle of social equality. His basic attitude to economics is the same as to politics. To him economic as well as political values are subordinate to moral values. An economics which does not take into account moral principles should be rejected as false:

"That economics is untrue which ignores or disgraces moral values."<sup>4</sup>

"True economics never militates against the highest ethical standard, just as all true ethics to be worth its name, must at the same time be good economics. An economics that inculcates Mammon worship and enables the strong to amass wealth at the expense of the weak, is a false and dismal science. It spells death. True economics, on the other hand, stands for social justice, it promotes the good of all equally, including the weakest, and is indispensable for decent life."<sup>5</sup>

Economics is the science which tries to find out the best way of satisfying the material wants of a man. This way, according to Gandhiji, should be one which leads to true happiness. True happiness does not lie in multiplying our wants indefinitely and then wearing ourselves out in the ceaseless effort to satisfy them, but in keeping our desires

<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, 15 April 1933.

<sup>2</sup> *Harijan*, 15 January 1938.

<sup>3</sup> *Harijan*, 9 October 1937.

<sup>2</sup> *Young India*, 23 April 1925.

<sup>4</sup> *Young India*, 26 December 1924.

<sup>5</sup> *Young India*, 26 December 1924.

within the bounds of moderation. The criterion of a moderate and legitimate desire is that its fulfilment should increase our capacity for the service of humanity.

"Civilization in the real sense of the term, consists not in the multiplication but in the deliberate and voluntary restriction of wants. This alone promotes real happiness and contentment and increases the capacity for service."<sup>1</sup>

In answer to a question Gandhiji has made it quite clear that he does not regard material comfort as bad in itself, and does not inculcate self-denial for its own sake. His point of view is this. The real purpose of life is spiritual development, which can only be achieved through the service of our fellow-beings. Material comfort, as far as it helps us in this, is not merely permissible but necessary. But as soon as it reaches the point where it produces indolence and proves to be an obstruction in the way of service leading to spiritual development, it is positively bad. Even intellectual pleasures should be judged by this standard:

"Q. But some comforts may be necessary even for man's spiritual development. One could not advance himself by identifying himself with the discomfort and squalor of the villager.

"A. A certain degree of physical harmony and comfort is necessary but above that level it becomes a hindrance instead of help. Therefore the ideal of creating an unlimited number of wants and satisfying them seems to be a delusion and a snare. The satisfaction of one's physical needs, even the intellectual needs of one's narrow self, must meet a point, a dead stop, before it degenerates into physical and intellectual voluptuousness. A man must arrange his physical and cultural circumstances so that they may not hinder him in the service of humanity on which all his energies should be concentrated."

So Gandhiji regards economic, and for the matter of that even cultural values, not as independent but subservient to the higher moral and religious values. He allows us a reasonable measure of material and intellectual pleasure, but at the same

<sup>1</sup> *Yeravada Mandir*, p. 36.

time he wants us to be vigilant so that the satisfaction of physical and intellectual needs does not degenerate into "voluptuousness" which in his vocabulary means pleasure which hinders us in the service of humanity. His ideal is, and remains, renunciation.

But Gandhiji had enough insight into human nature to know that renunciation is not easy to achieve. Generally, people do not get rid of the desire for worldly pleasures, but merely repress it. Without studying psycho-analysis, Gandhiji had learnt from his great experience of life that repression causes nervous and mental troubles. It is false renunciation which does not help spiritual development but hinders it. True renunciation is possible only when yearning for the higher purpose of life is so great that worldly pleasures are spontaneously rejected as obstructions:

"As long as you desire inner help and comfort from anything, you should keep it. If you were to give it up in a mood of self-sacrifice or out of a stern sense of duty, you would continue to want it back, and that unsatisfied want would make trouble for you. Only give up a thing when you want some other condition so much that the thing has no longer any attraction for you, or when it seems to interfere with that which is more greatly desired."<sup>1</sup>

Now the question is, what is "the degree of physical comfort and harmony" which Gandhiji admits to be not only permissible but necessary? In other words, what personal needs are fundamental for every human being which must, in any case, be satisfied? Here we must again stress the point that Gandhiji far from praising abject poverty or destitution condemns it as morally degrading:

"No one has ever suggested that grinding pauperism can lead to anything but moral degradation."<sup>2</sup>

As long as man's fundamental physical needs remain unsatisfied, there is no possibility of his achieving inner peace of

<sup>1</sup> *Vishva-Bharati Quarterly*, New series II, Part II, p. 46.

<sup>2</sup> *Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, Natesan (Madras), Fourth Edn., p. 350.

mind or spiritual satisfaction. The sick or the starving can never be soothed with a "song from Kabir".

The fundamental needs include food and clothing and, in many cases, also a house to live in:

"Every human being has a right to live and therefore to find the wherewithal to feed himself and where necessary to clothe himself."<sup>1</sup>

The only society which, according to Gandhiji, can guarantee the satisfaction of these fundamental needs to all, is one where every individual gets enough work to earn his living, and production of elementary necessities of life is for use, not for profit. Of course, both of these characteristics are present in a socialistic order, but Gandhiji's "Ramrajya", in which there is no room for state or government, is entirely different from the socialist status of our day. Even economically it differs in many important respects from the existing forms of socialist society.

"According to me the economic constitution of India and for the matter of that of the world, should be such that no one under it should suffer from want of food and clothing. In other words, everybody should be able to get enough work to enable him to make the two ends meet. And the ideal can be universally realized only if the *means of production of the elementary necessities of life remain in the control of the masses*. These should be freely available to all as God's air and water are or ought to be; they should not be made the vehicle of traffic for the exploitation of others. Their monopolization by any country, nation or group of persons would be unjust. The neglect of the simple principle is the cause of the destitution that we witness today not only in this unhappy land but in other parts of the world too."<sup>2</sup>

If we examine this in the light of Gandhiji's religious and moral teachings we find that this ideal economic system is one in which:

<sup>1</sup> *Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, Natesan (Madras), Fourth Edn., p. 350.

<sup>2</sup> *Young India*, 15 November 1928.

- (1) everybody gets an opportunity to earn his living through manual work. Bread-Labour is for Gandhiji an important religious principle. It can strictly be followed only when each individual can grow enough food for himself by tilling the soil with his own hands.
- (2) land which produces food and other necessities of life does not belong to any individual or individuals but "remains in the control of the masses", so that they can use it "freely like air and water". Being "in the control of masses" means that the whole land in a village should be the property of the village community, and all the people of the village should cultivate it on a collective or cooperative basis. The individual ownership of land, being against the principle of *aparigraha*, has no place in Gandhiji's Ramrajya. Besides, if land belongs to any individual, or individuals, it cannot be freely used by all, and the principle of Bread-Labour cannot be universally followed.
- (3) articles of food and clothing should be produced for use and not made commodities of trade and commerce.

Obviously, these conditions could be fulfilled only in a decentralized rural economy consisting of small self-sufficient village communities. Such social order alone could be strictly non-violent, dispensing with state and government, army and police. Centralization necessarily implies all these instruments of violence:

"I suggest that if India is to evolve along non-violent lines, it will have to decentralize many things. Centralization cannot be sustained and defended without adequate force. Simple homes from which there is nothing to take away require no policing. The palaces of the rich must have strong guards to protect them against dacoity. So must have huge factories. Rurally organized India will run less risk of foreign invasion than urbanized India, well-equipped with military, naval and air forces."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, 30 December 1939.

Decentralized rural economy, based on small self-sufficient village communities, satisfies positive as well as negative conditions of non-violence as conceived by Gandhiji, i.e., it not only keeps society free from violence but promotes love and service. His conception of social life is that each individual should be bound to all others with the same close ties of love as bind him to his family. This relationship is possible only in small communities. If a man confines his love to a small circle, it is not dissipated, but retains its depth and intensity. This is the underlying idea of Gandhiji's doctrine of *Swadeshi*, which forms the moral basis of his economics:

"*Swadeshi* is that spirit in us which restricts us to the use and service of our immediate surroundings to the exclusion of the remote."<sup>1</sup>

But the service of our immediate surroundings i.e. of our neighbours should be infused with the spirit of service of the whole mankind. It should not be regarded as an end in itself but as a means to the larger end of the welfare of all humanity:

"He believed in the truth implicitly that a man could serve his neighbours and humanity at the same time, the condition being that the service of the neighbours did not in any way involve the exploitation of any other human being. The neighbours would then understand the spirit in which the service was given. They would also know that they would be expected to give their services to their neighbours. Thus considered, it would spread like the proverbial snowball gathering strength in geometrical progression encircling the the whole earth."<sup>2</sup>

Just as a non-violent society necessarily implies decentralized rural economy so does rural economy in its turn indicate small-scale industry based on handicrafts, of which the spinning-wheel was chosen by Gandhiji as the most significant symbol:

"Rural economy, as I have conceived it, eschews exploitation altogether, and exploitation is the essence of violence. You have to be rural-minded before you can be non-violent

<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, 23 March 1947.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

and to be rural-minded you have to have faith in the spinning-wheel."<sup>1</sup>

The reason why Gandhiji disliked large-scale machine industry has been mentioned before. In his religion of humanity the most deadly sin was the oppression and exploitation of one individual or nation by another. He had found by observation that the real cause of international tensions and wars was the exploitation by the industrially advanced nations of the backward ones. So he regarded the modern industrial system and its instrument, the machine, as the root of all troubles. He knew that the machine in itself was neither good nor bad, but he was convinced that it offered a temptation for the exploitation of one nation by another which was difficult to resist:

"What is the cause of the present chaos ? It is exploitation, I will not say, of the weaker nations by the stronger but of the sister nations by sister nations. And my fundamental objection to machinery rests on the fact that it is machinery that has enabled these nations to exploit others. In itself, it is a wooden thing and can be turned to good purpose or bad. But it is easily turned to a bad purpose as we know."<sup>2</sup>

From a purely economic point of view, it could be said that the machine was a great boon to mankind, as it could be used to put an end to hunger and poverty and to supply all men with the necessities of life. But Gandhiji's point of view is essentially religious and moral. Even if he could be argued out of his belief that industrialization would inevitably lead to un-employment and exploitation, and convinced that the machine and the industrial system, of which it is the symbol, could be used for the good of all, another moral objection would still remain. He was sure that if production is concentrated in a few industrial centres and complicated and cumbersome methods are adopted for its distribution, dishonest people are bound to get opportunities for fraud, profiteering and speculation. All this can be eliminated by adopting decentralized rural economy under which there are

<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, 4 November 1939.

<sup>2</sup> *Young India*, 22 October 1931.



small self-sufficient units, where everybody works with his hands to produce goods for his own use or for distribution among his immediate neighbours :

"Granting that machinery may supply all the needs of humanity, still it would concentrate production in particular areas so that you will have to go about in a roundabout way to regulate distribution, whereas if there is production and distribution both in the respective areas where things are required, it is automatically regulated and there is less chance for fraud, none for speculation."<sup>1</sup>

Such a simple idyllic economic order it was Gandhiji's dream to set up in India. He wanted to make every village a self-sufficient unit, producing just enough to meet its needs. He was not opposed to machines but to production for profit and exploitation, which he regarded as necessary consequences of the use of modern machinery. If such machines could be made in the village itself and used without interfering with its self-sufficient economy, he would not have the least objection. But if the machine came as the instrument of large-scale industrialization, the village will have to face exploitation and ruin. The end of the village will mean the end of India. The land may continue to exist as a physical entity but its whole character will be debased and all hopes of a non-violent society which it is India's mission to build, will vanish :

"I would say that if the village perishes India will perish too. India will no more be India. Her own mission in the world will get lost. The revival of the village is possible only when it is no more exploited. Industrialization on a mass scale will necessarily lead to passive or active exploitation of the villages as the problems of competition and marketing come in. Therefore, we have to concentrate on the village being self-contained, manufacturing *only for use*. Provided this character of the village industry is maintained, there would be no objection to villagers using even the modern machines and tools *that they can make and can afford to use*. Only they should not be used as the means of exploitation of others."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, 2 November 1934.

<sup>2</sup> *Harijan*, 29 August 1936.

## CHAPTER III

### THE FIRST STAGE OF RAMRAJYA

#### *Gandhiji's Picture of India After Independence*

"T R U T H and Love" are for Gandhiji two aspects of the same Absolute Reality as well as the highest forms of moral action. Perfect realization of Truth and Love was his religious ideal. Conceiving this in terms of social life he had found his social ideal of Ramrajya. Had he been a mere visionary and capable of believing that his social ideal was perfect in conception he would have elaborated it and insisted upon realizing it in full within the shortest possible time. But he was a 'practical idealist' and knew very well that the Idea of Truth and Love could never fully express itself in any social ideal which man could ever conceive of. Therefore, no social ideal could be perfect or final. "But for practical purposes one has to regard the ideal which one formed after full inquiry and experiment as final and use it as a guide to his personal action until further inquiry and experiment make it necessary to modify it."<sup>1</sup>

Besides, he knew very well that even this imperfect ideal could not be realized easily or quickly. Swaraj or Ramrajya was a distant goal which receded as one proceeded towards it. But Gandhiji's faith in the principle of *Nishkama Karma* (disinterested action), as enunciated in the Gita, was so great that to him every step which the seeker took in the pursuit of Truth was a goal in itself :

"It seems the attempt to win Swaraj is Swaraj itself. The faster we run towards it, the longer seems to be the distance traversed. The same is the case with all ideals."<sup>2</sup>

"The goal ever recedes from us. The greater the progress, the greater the recognition of our unworthiness. Satisfaction

<sup>1</sup> *Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, Natesan (Madras), Fourth Edition, p. 685.      <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

lies in the effort not in attainment. 'Full effort is full victory.'<sup>1</sup>

Thus Gandhiji was aware that his social ideal was far off and could not be reached in the near future. Now the question is what attitude would he like us to adopt towards the present social order till it could be replaced by a new one. Both his precept and his practice favour a reasonable measure of compromise with circumstances. In fact, compromise is a very important principle of Gandhiji's moral philosophy. He has laid great emphasis on it, firstly, because every social theory or ideal is imperfect and nobody can be sure that he is absolutely in the right :

"I am essentially a man of compromise because I am never sure that I am right."<sup>2</sup>

And secondly, because every ideal is difficult to attain, there is generally a gap between theory and practice :

"Human life is a series of compromises and it is not always easy to achieve in practice what one has found to be true in theory."<sup>3</sup>

"All my life through, the very insistence on truth has taught me to appreciate the beauty of compromise. I saw later in life that this spirit was an essential part of Satyagraha."<sup>4</sup>

But compromise is allowed only in details not in principles, in non-essentials not in essentials :

"There are eternal principles which admit of no compromise and one must be prepared to lay down one's life in the practice of them."<sup>5</sup>

"All compromise is based on give and take, but there can be no give and take in fundamentals. Any compromise on fundamentals is a surrender because it is all give and no take."<sup>6</sup>

Compromise in minor and non-essential matters of detail is, from Gandhiji's point of view, not only permissible but necessary, because it strengthens in the mind of the fighter for

<sup>1</sup> *Young India*, 9 March 1922.

<sup>2</sup> *A Week with Gandhiji*, by Louis Fischer, p. 102.

<sup>3</sup> *Harijan*, 18 November 1939.

<sup>4</sup> *Experiments with Truth*, p. 184.

<sup>5</sup> *Harijan*, 18 November 1939.

<sup>6</sup> *Harijan*, 30 March 1940.

Truth the will to hold firmly to essentials, even at the cost of his life :

"Full surrender of non-essentials is a condition precedent to accession of internal strength to defend the essential by dying."<sup>1</sup>

The essentials for Gandhiji are Truth, Love, the unity of all religions and the five cardinal virtues. His faith in these moral principles is absolute and unshakable. Any compromise which weakens or in any way tampers with this faith is for him out of the question. But in putting these principles to practice, he is prepared to compromise with circumstances or with human frailties :

"A principle is the expression of perfection and as imperfect beings like us cannot practise perfection we devise every moment limits of its compromise in practice."<sup>2</sup>

But a compromise may be made only after we have tried our utmost to realize the ideal and failed, and it must be made with the consciousness that we have not been able to rise upto the high level of the ideal. Under no circumstances should we tamper with the ideal and try to bring it down to our own level. Besides, in spite of compromises at every step we should constantly go on trying in all sincerity to reach the ideal one day :

"A principle is a principle and in no case can it be watered down because of our incapacity to live it in practice. We have to strive to achieve it and the striving should be deliberate, conscious and hard."<sup>3</sup>

"The reality is always present before us, but my striving is always to reach the ideal. Euclid's straight line exists only in our conception, but we have always to postulate it. We have always to strive to draw a true line corresponding to Euclid's imaginary line."<sup>4</sup>

As far as individuals are concerned, they can, if they have a firm faith and strong determination, largely follow higher moral principles even in adverse circumstances, and some-

<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, 10 November 1940.

<sup>2</sup> *Young India*, 21 October 1926.

<sup>3</sup> *Harijan*, 18 November 1939.

<sup>4</sup> *Harijan*, 8 September 1940.

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times, succeed in achieving the personal ideals they set for themselves. But collective ideals have to depend much more on circumstances of time and place. Besides, they require concerted action by people of different dispositions and capacities. Therefore, those who work for them have to take into consideration many factors and try to reconcile many different, sometimes, conflicting points of view, which can never be done without compromise at every step. Gandhiji was fully aware of this. He knew very well that his dream of Ramrajya could not be realized in the near future. Therefore, he had compromised by indicating a limited initial stage of the long, long journey he had asked his people to undertake. That is, he had visualized for free India a moderately non-violent secular democratic state as a preliminary to the purely non-violent society of his conception. In his writings, references to this interim plan are interspersed among those which he makes to his ultimate social ideal. A superficial or unobservant reader may be misled into thinking that there are obvious contradictions in Gandhiji's political and social ideas. But a careful study of these ideas clearly shows that two distinct trains of thought run through them—one referring to his ideal of perfectly non-violent society, which he wants to keep in all its virgin purity above considerations of policy and expediency; and the other to the practical plan of a national state, which he wants to realize in the immediate future through reasonable compromise with the prevailing circumstances. If we do not mix up these two threads, we will not find any contradiction in Gandhiji's thinking.

The very acceptance, even for an interim period, of some form of state was for Gandhiji the limit of compromise, for the state necessarily implies violence. But he believed that if proper effort was made, the element of violence in a democratic state could be considerably reduced, and it could be turned into a predominantly non-violent institution. Such a state he was striving to build in India.

"A government cannot succeed in becoming entirely non-violent because it represents all the people. I cannot conceive of such a golden age. But I do believe in the possibility of a

predominantly non-violent society. And I am working for it."<sup>1</sup>

"In the ideal state, therefore, there is no political power because there is no state. But the ideal is never fully realized in life. Hence the classical statement of Thoreau that that government is the best which governs the least."<sup>2</sup>

The government or state must be secular in character. That is, it should not profess or patronize any particular denominational religion, but should treat all religions alike, giving them full freedom of belief, practice and preaching :

"The state should undoubtedly be secular. Everyone living in it should be entitled to profess his religion without let or hindrance so long as the individual obeyed the common law of the land. There should be no interference with missionary effort. But no mission could enjoy the patronage of the state."<sup>3</sup>

For this national state of free India, Gandhiji visualized the same pattern of representative government as existed in Western democratic countries, with a slight modification. He would give the right of vote to those only who worked with their hands and contributed something to the common pool of the country's production :

"By Swaraj I mean the government of India by the consent of the people as ascertained by the largest number of the adult population, male or female, native born or domiciled, who have contributed by manual labour to the service of the state and who have taken the trouble of having their names registered as voters."<sup>4</sup>

Indian Swaraj was to be a national state, but Gandhiji's nationalism was not so narrow as to exclude internationalism. As a matter of fact, he was one of the greatest advocates of international community and cooperation. Not only did he want India to be a friend and ally of all the progressive nations of the world, but he was prepared to consider the idea of his country surrendering part of her sovereignty and joining an all-world federation :

<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, 9 March 1940.

<sup>2</sup> *Young India*, 2 July 1931.

<sup>3</sup> *Young India*, 29 January 1925.

<sup>4</sup> *Harijan*, 24 August 1947.

"In these days of rapid intercommunication and growing consciousness of oneness of all mankind we must recognize that our nationalism must not be inconsistent with progressive inter-nationalism. India cannot stand in isolation and unaffected by what is going on in other parts of the world. We should, therefore, range ourselves with the progressive forces of the world."<sup>1</sup>

"The better mind of the world desires today not absolutely independent states warring one against another but a federation of friendly interdependent states. The consummation of that event may be far off. I want to make no grand claim for our country. But I see nothing grand or impossible about our expressing our readiness for universal interdependence rather than dependence. I desire the ability to be totally independent without asserting my independence."<sup>2</sup>

Gandhiji's conception of internationalism is, like all his political ideas, derived from his fundamental religious principles, so that his internationalism goes much further than that of politicians or political philosophers and reaches heights of universal love and brotherhood which none but a few great souls have ever touched. He has placed before India not only the great ideal of friendship and cooperation with other nations, but the far greater one of devoting all her resources to the welfare of all, and of sacrificing, if need be, her very life for the protection of mankind :

"I want the freedom of my country so that other countries may learn something from my free country, so that the resources of my country may be utilized for the benefit of mankind. Just as the cult of patriotism teaches us today that the individual has to die for the family, the family has to die for village, the village for the district, the district for the province, and the province for the country, even so a country has to be free in order that it may die, if necessary, for the benefit of the world. My love, therefore, of nationalism or my idea of nationalism, is that my country may become free, that if

<sup>1</sup> *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 17 September 1923.

<sup>2</sup> *Young India*, 26 December 1924.

need be, the whole country may die, so that the human race may live.”<sup>1</sup>

To reconcile the idea of the Indian national state with that of internationalism was easy for Gandhiji. The difficulty lay in harmonizing the conception of state, national or otherwise, with his basic creed of non-violence. He was fully aware that the Indian national state will have to keep a police force and an army, which was against the principle of non-violence, and that, by helping in setting up such a state, he was himself to some extent deviating from the path of perfect non-violence. But he was convinced that India's claim for national independence was based on truth, and he could not desist from responding to the call of truth simply because it would make him indirectly responsible for the violence in which the Indian national state would be necessarily involved. Some amount of violence was unavoidable for any state; and the believer in non-violence had to put up with it till he could persuade people to set up a stateless society. In the meantime, he had to co-operate with the national government in the hope of being able to create conditions for reducing the use of violence to the minimum, provided the government was prepared to listen to the voice of truth :

“A believer in non-violence is pledged not to resort to violence or physical force either directly or indirectly in defence of anything but is not precluded from helping man or institutions that are not themselves based on non-violence. If the reverse were the case, I would for instance be precluded from helping India to attain Swaraj because the future parliament of India under Swaraj I know for certain, will be having some military or police forces, or to take a domestic illustration, I may not help a son to secure justice, because, forsooth, he is not a believer in non-violence.”<sup>2</sup>

So Gandhiji, knowing that most leaders of the Indian freedom movement had accepted non-violence only as a policy not as a creed, had decided to give his full support to the

<sup>1</sup> *Gandhiji in Indian Villages*, by Mahadev Desai. Ganesan, Madras, 1927.

<sup>2</sup> *Young India*, 1 June 1921.



freedom movement, and after India had become independent, to cooperate with the national government and try to persuade it to refrain as far as possible from using violence. He was aware that many people in India, specially the races with martial traditions, did not believe in non-violence. But he hoped that there was, and will always be, a group of those who had faith in pure non-violence and would go on striving to achieve his ideal :

"What policy the nationalist government of India will adopt, I cannot say. I may not even survive, much as I would love to. If I do, I would advise the adoption of non-violence to the utmost extent possible, and that would be India's great contribution to the peace of the world and the establishment of a new world order. I expect that with the existence of so many martial races in India, all of whom will have a voice in the government of India, the national policy will incline towards militarism<sup>1</sup> of a modified character. I shall certainly hope that all the effort in the last twenty-two years to show the efficiency of non-violence as a political force, will not have gone in vain and a strong party representing true non-violence will exist in the country."<sup>2</sup>

Apart from the question of the armed forces and the police, Gandhiji was satisfied that the constitution and administration of the national government of India would be based on justice and would not deviate much from the path of non-violence. His only concern was, lest in the course of establishing justice, India be tempted to adopt the extreme violent measures which the communist countries had adopted. He was afraid if that happened, the country would for ever be involved in vicious circles of violence and the dream of a non-violent society would never be realized:

"It is my firm conviction that if the state suppressed capitalism it will be caught in the coils of violence itself and fail to develop non-violence at any time. What I would personally prefer would not be centralization of power in the hands of

<sup>1</sup> The word militarism is used loosely here in the sense of being armed.

<sup>2</sup> *Harijan*, 21 June 1942.

the state but an extension of the sense of trusteeship as in my opinion the violence of private ownership is less injurious than the violence of the state. However, if it is unavoidable I would support a minimum of state ownership.”<sup>1</sup>

The theory of trusteeship, to which reference has been made, has a special importance in Gandhiji's economic ideas, and is the central point of the economic policy which he contemplated for the national government of India. So a brief discussion of it is indicated here.

Now we must remember that Gandhiji's ultimate ideal is *Ramrajya*, in which there will be no private property and no government. Small village communities will be responsible for the production and equal distribution of all necessities of life. Everybody will put in as much labour as he can to earn his living and will get equal wages. What is being discussed here is a compromise plan for the long interim period which must elapse before *Ramrajya* comes into existence. As Gandhiji's ideal of an equal distribution of wealth was not to be realized in the near future, he was prepared to content himself for the present with an equitable distribution:

“My ideal is equal distribution but as far as I can see, it is not to be realized. I, therefore, work for equitable distribution.”<sup>2</sup>

In our present society the desire for private property is very strong in the minds of the people, and they want wages commensurate with their abilities; as abilities differ, there is bound to be a difference in their incomes. So the more practicable scheme of equitable distribution is to let people earn as much as they can, but to limit their expenditure on themselves to a part of it, allowing them to keep the rest in trust to be devoted to the welfare of society as a whole:

“My idea of society is that while we are born equal, meaning that we have a right to equal opportunity, all have not the same capacity . . . . Therefore, in the nature of things, some will have the ability to earn more and others less. People

<sup>1</sup> “An interview with Gandhiji,” *Modern Review*, October 1935.

<sup>2</sup> *Young India*, 17 March 1927.

with talents will have more, and they will utilize their talents for this purpose. If they utilize their talents kindly they will be performing the work of the state. Such people exist as trustees, on no other terms. I would allow a man of intellect to earn more, I would not cramp his talent. But the bulk of his greater earnings must be used for the good of the state, just as the income of all sons of the father go to the common family fund. They would have their earnings only as trustees."<sup>1</sup>

If violent methods are used for equitable distribution of wealth, they would demoralize talented people who can earn more and would work less for the state than they can. This would be the short-sighted policy of killing the goose that lays the golden eggs. So it is better to pursue the way of non-violence which is the way of trusteeship :

"How is this to be brought about? Non-violently? Or should the wealthy be dispossessed of their possessions? To do this we would naturally have to resort to violence. This violent action cannot benefit society. Society will be the poorer, for it will lose the gifts of a man who knows how to accumulate wealth. Therefore, non-violent way is evidently superior. The rich man will be left in possession of his wealth of which he will use what he reasonably requires for his personal needs and will act as a trustee for the remainder to be used for the society. In this argument, honesty on the part of the trustee is assumed."<sup>2</sup>

But if the trustee is not honest or does not agree to act as a trustee? Gandhiji has an infallible remedy for this as for all cases of excess or injustice—civil disobedience, non-cooperation or some other form of *Satyagraha* :

"If, however, in spite of the utmost effort, the rich do not become guardians of the poor in the true sense of the term and the latter are more and more crushed and die of hunger, what is to be done? In trying to find out the solution of the riddle I have lighted on non-violent non-cooperation as the right and infallible means. The rich cannot accumulate wealth

<sup>1</sup> *Young India*, 26 November 1931.

<sup>2</sup> *Harijan*, 25 August 1940.

without the cooperation of the poor in society. If this knowledge were to penetrate to and spread among the poor, they would become strong and would learn how to free themselves by means of non-violence from the crushing inequalities which have brought them to the verge of starvation.”<sup>1</sup>

Gandhiji had to apply this general principle to the particular problem which India had to face. The country was under foreign rule, and foreign capitalists were exploiting it with the help of a whole army of native agents. Economic inequality had reached its limit, and the great majority of the Indian people had been reduced to abject poverty. Gandhiji realized that it was no easy matter to touch the callous hearts of the exploiters and inspire them with the spirit of trusteeship. His non-violence was put to the most difficult test in his life. He knew that mere persuasion would not do. The code of *ahimsa* obliged him to try to bring about a change of heart in them. But at the same time he was prepared, in case his effort were not successful within a reasonable period of time, to launch a *Satyagraha* movement for economic freedom on the same lines as the National Congress was carrying on for the political freedom :

“The great obstacle in the path of non-violence is the presence in our midst of indigenous interests that have sprung from British rule, the interests of moneyed men, speculators, scripholders, landholders, factory owners and the like. All these do not always realize that they are living on the blood of the masses and when they do, they become as callous as the British principals whose tools and agents they are. If like the Japanese Samurai, they could but realise that they must give up their blood-stained gains, the battle is won for non-violence . . . . The aim of the non-violent worker must ever be to convert. He may not, however, wait endlessly. When, therefore, the limit is reached, he takes risks and conceives plans of *Satyagraha* which may mean civil disobedience and the like. His patience is never exhausted to the point of giving up his creed.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, 25 August 1940.

<sup>2</sup> *Young India*, 6 February 1930.

*Satyagraha* is, according to Gandhiji, the best method for securing economic justice. And it is the only method if the poor people, who are the victims of exploitation, are under foreign rule. But as soon as political power passes into their own hands and they are ruled by their own representatives, they can adopt a simpler method, that is, make laws to redress all their grievances :

“Civil disobedience and non-cooperation are designed for use when people that is tillers of the soil have no political power. But immediately they have political power naturally their grievances, whatever their character, will be ameliorated through legislative channels.”<sup>1</sup>

Some people think that Gandhiji would condemn all legislation for reform or redress of injustice as a form of violence. It is true in the sense that he thought legislation to be against the spirit of pure *ahimsa*, and there could be no room for it in his ideal society. But, at the same time, he regarded democratic legislation to be perfectly consistent with the relative non-violence which is possible in our present society :

Q. “You would govern non-violently but all legislation is violence.

A. “No. Not all legislation. Legislation imposed by people on themselves is non-violence to the extent possible in society.”<sup>2</sup>

No doubt, Gandhiji would have liked to reduce the powers of the state to the minimum and would not, as a rule, have it interfere with individual life. But in order to do away with the injustice and exploitation going on in India in his time, he expected from the national government the maximum interference with vested interests and continued legislation for righting the wrongs done by them to other classes of people. He wanted, however, that before legislative measures were adopted, an appeal should be made to their sense of justice to secure their support for the proposed legislation. Speaking at the Round Table Conference in London, Gandhiji referred to the demand of the British Government that the

<sup>1</sup> “Interview with Prof. Ranga, end of 1944”. Reported by Pyarelal.

<sup>2</sup> “Conversation reported by Mahadev Desai”, *Harijan*, 1940.

future national Government of India should bind itself not to pass discriminatory laws which placed the interest of any one section of people before that of any other section and said:

"I am afraid that for years to come India would be engaged in passing legislation in order to raise the down-trodden, the fallen, from the mire into which they have been sunk by the capitalists, by the landlords, by the so-called higher classes and then, subsequently and scientifically, by the British rulers. If we are to lift these people from the mire, then it would be the bounden duty of the National Government of India, in order to set its house in order, continually to give preference to these people and even free them from the burden under which they are being crushed. And if landlords, zamindars, moneyed men and those who are today enjoying privileges—I do not care whether they are Europeans or Indians—if they find that they are discriminated against, I shall sympathize with them but I will not be able to help them, even if I could possibly do so, because I would seek their assistance in that process and without their assistance it would not be possible to raise these people out of the mire."<sup>1</sup>

The only assurance that Gandhiji could give to those people was this :

"No existing interests legitimately acquired and not being in conflict with the best interest of the nation in general, shall be interfered with except in accordance with the law applicable to such interests."<sup>2</sup>

What Gandhiji has emphasized in connection with legislation for securing social justice, is that big incomes, specially estates left by rich persons to their heirs, should be taxed as heavily as possible, because the gratuitous acquisition of wealth by them is not only unjust from the social point of view but morally harmful to the heirs themselves :

"Riches have not yet been sufficiently taxed. In this, of all countries of the world, possession of inordinate wealth by individuals should be held as a crime against Indian humanity. Therefore, the maximum limit of taxation of riches beyond a

<sup>1</sup> *Nation's Voice*, p. 71.      <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

certain margin, should never be reached. In England, I understand, they have already gone as far as 70 % of the earning beyond a prescribed figure. There is no reason why India should not go to a much higher figure. Why should there not be death duties? Those sons of millionaires who are of age and yet inherit their parents are losers for the very inheritance. The nation thus becomes a double loser. For the inheritance should rightly belong to the nation. And the nation loses in that the full faculties of the heirs are not drawn out, being crushed under the load of riches.”<sup>1</sup>

We have seen that though Gandhiji ardently believed in a non-violent stateless society, he had a broad conception of compromise, based not only on practical expediency but on moral principle, which had led him to accept the state with all its implications—army, police, legislation and taxation for an indefinite interim period. It was the same spirit of compromise which made him put up, on certain conditions, with modern industry and machines. Experience had forced him to admit that in the present circumstances machines were unavoidable :

“Ideally, however, I would rule out machinery, even as I would reject this very body which is not helpful to salvation, and seek the absolute liberation of the soul. From this point of view I would reject all machinery, but machines will remain because, like the body, they are inevitable.”<sup>2</sup>

But the necessary condition for permitting the use of machinery is that it should contribute to the welfare of all, not merely that of a particular group or class :

“That use of machinery is lawful which subserves the interest of all.”<sup>3</sup>

Obviously, smaller machines which do not displace human labour but lighten it, are not only permissible but welcome :

“Machinery has its place ; it has come to stay. But it should not be allowed to displace necessary human labour.”<sup>4</sup>

When asked if he was against all machinery, Gandhiji said :

“My answer is emphatically No. But I am against its indis-

<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, 31 July 1937.

<sup>2</sup> *Young India*, 20 November 1924.

<sup>3</sup> *Young India*, 15 April 1926.

<sup>4</sup> *Young India*, 5 November 1925.

criminate multiplication. I refuse to be dazzled by the seeming triumph of machinery. But simple tools and instruments and such machinery as lightens the burden of millions of cottages, I should welcome."<sup>1</sup>

For Gandhiji, the real question is not that of smaller or bigger machines but of the motive behind the use of machines. Any machine if it is used, not with the intention of acquiring wealth for oneself or of exploiting others but in the spirit of love and service of mankind, is welcome. But bigger factories are acceptable to Gandhiji only on the following express conditions that :

- (1) they do not cause unemployment;
- (2) they are owned or at least controlled by the state;
- (3) they are run in the spirit of public service;
- (4) the labourers are given reasonable wages;
- (5) their work is made attractive and pleasant.

We shall here quote an interview which makes Gandhiji's attitude to machinery quite clear:

"What I object to is the craze for machinery not machinery as such. The craze is for what they call labour-saving machinery. Men go on 'saving labour' till thousands are without work and thrown on the open streets to die of starvation. I want to save time and labour not for a fraction of mankind, but for all; I want the concentration of wealth not in the hands of a few, but in the hands of all. Today, machinery merely helps a few to ride on the back of millions. The impetus behind it all is not the philanthropy to save labour, but greed. It is against this constitution of things that I am fighting with all my might."

Q. "Then you are fighting not against machinery as such, but against its abuses which are so much in evidence today."

A. "I would unhesitatingly say, yes; but I would add that scientific truths and discoveries should first of all cease to be mere instruments of greed. Then labourers will not be over-

<sup>1</sup> *Young India*, 17 June 1926.



worked and machinery, instead of being a hindrance, will be a help. I am aiming not at the eradication of all machinery but its limitations."

Q. "When logically worked out, that would seem to imply that all complicated power-driven machinery should go."

A. "It might have to go but I must make one thing clear. The supreme consideration is man. The machine should not tend to make atrophied the limbs of man. For instance, I would make intelligent exceptions. Take the case of the Singer Sewing Machine. It is one of the few useful things ever invented, and there is romance about the device itself. Singer saw his wife labouring over the tedious process of sewing and seaming with her own hands, and simply out of his love for her he devised the Sewing Machine in order to save her from unnecessary labour. He, however, saved not only her labour but also the labour of every one who could purchase a sewing machine."

Q. "But in that case there would have to be a factory for making these Singer Machines, and it would have to contain powerdriven machinery of ordinary type."

A. "Yes, but I am socialist enough to say that such factories should be nationalised or state-controlled. They ought only to be working under the most attractive and ideal conditions, not for profit but for the benefit of humanity, love taking the place of greed as the motive. It is an alteration in the conditions of labour that I want. This mad rush for wealth must cease, and the labourer must be assured, not only of a living wage, but a daily task that is not a mere drudgery. The machine will, under these conditions, be as much a help to the man working it as to the state or the man who owns it. The present mad rush will cease, and the labourer will work (as I have said) under attractive and ideal conditions. This is but one of the exceptions I have in mind. The Singer Machine had love at its back. The individual is the one supreme consideration. The saving of the labour of the individual should be the object and honest humanitarian consideration, and not greed, the motive. Replace greed by love and everything will come right."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Young India*, 13 November 1924.

Only one question remains now. What does Gandhiji mean by "a living wage" for labour? In other words, what "standard of living" does he want for the generality of people? We know that in his ideal society he contemplates a very simple life. In that society everybody will be content to have the bare necessities of existence. But now we have to find out what standard of living for the common people he had in view for the national state in free India.

No definite answer to this question is to be found in his writings. But there can be no doubt that he was not satisfied with the present standard of life of the common people, specially in the villages. He wanted to raise it to a much higher level, providing even the poorest with all the amenities of civilization, though not its corrupting luxuries. Once he said to an audience of poor people :

"Swaraj of my dream is the poor man's swaraj. The necessities of life should be enjoyed by you in common with those enjoyed by the princes and the moneyed men. But that does not mean that you should have palaces like theirs. They are not necessary for happiness. You or I would be lost in them. But you ought to get all the amenities of life which a rich man enjoys. I have not the slightest doubt that Swaraj is not *Poorna Swaraj* until these amenities are guaranteed to you under it."<sup>1</sup>

Some idea of Gandhiji's vision of social life in free India can be formed from the picture of a self-governing village community which he has drawn:

"My idea of Village Swaraj is that it is a complete republic, independent of its neighbours for its vital wants, and yet interdependent for many others in which dependence is a necessity. Thus every village's first concern will be to grow its own food crops and cotton for its cloth. It should have a reserve for its cattle, recreation and playground for adults and children. Then if there is more land available, it will grow useful money crops, thus excluding *ganja*, tobacco, opium and the like. The village will maintain a village theatre, school

<sup>1</sup> *Young India*, 12 March 1931.

and public hall. It will have its own waterworks ensuring clear supply. This can be done through controlled well and tanks. As far as possible every society will be conducted on the cooperative basis. There will be no castes such as we have today with their graded untouchability. Non-violence with its technique of Satyagraha and non-cooperation will be the sanction of the village community. There will be a compulsory service of village guards who will be selected by rotation from the register maintained by the village. The Government of the village will be maintained by a Panchayat of five persons, annually elected by the adult villagers, male and female, possessing minimum prescribed qualifications. These will have all the authority and jurisdiction required. Since there will be no system of punishments in the accepted sense, this Panchayat will be the legislature, judiciary and executive combined to operate for its year of office . . . . . I have not here examined the question of relations with the neighbouring villages and the centre if any. My purpose is to present an outline of village government. Here there is perfect democracy based on individual freedom. The individual is the architect of his own government. The law of non-violence rules him and his government. He and his government are to defy the might of a world. For the law governing every villager is that he will suffer death in defence of his and his village's honour."<sup>1</sup>

These *Gram Panchayats* were the primary units of the political and social order which Gandhiji wanted to set up in India in the immediate future. He had not thought out any plan of linking up these units with one another and with the central authority to make the complete pattern of the Indian State, because he believed in considering practical problems only when they actually presented themselves. Unfortunately, when the time for making a constitution for free India came, communal riots broke out throughout the country and he had to spend all his time and finally to lay down his life in the attempts to restore peace and harmony. So he could not elaborate the dim idea of the social and political order in free

<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, 9 October 1937.

India which he had expressed in his writings before independence. But as far as we can judge from his approach to the problems of national education, if he had had time to think about the constitution of the Indian national state he would have concentrated his whole attention on *Gram Panchayat* and its implications, and his interest in the administration of the Central and State governments would have been confined to limiting their powers so as to give full scope for self-government to village communities. His main concern would have been to see that urban economy was not based on the exploitation of the villages, but that urban and rural economies supplemented and sustained each other. His conception of the right relation between the town and the village was:

"I want to resuscitate the village of India. Today our villages have become a mere appendage to the cities. They exist, as it were, to be exploited by the latter and depend on the latter's sufferance. This is unnatural. It is only when the cities realize the duty of making an adequate return to the villages for the strength and sustenance which they derive from them instead of selfishly exploiting them, that a healthy and moral relationship between the two will spring up."<sup>1</sup>

Gandhiji regarded the village as the heart of India and wanted to save it for non-violence, at all costs. He believed that as long as the heart was sound, there was hope for the whole body.

<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

## TOWARDS PERFECT NON-VIOLENCE

*Basic Education—Constructive Programme—Satyagraha*

AS A "PRACTICAL IDEALIST" Gandhiji had his own strategy. He would compromise for the time being with circumstances; but while honouring the compromise in letter and spirit, he would never lose sight of his ideal but continue his efforts to realize it by changing the circumstances themselves. He knew very well that imperfect human nature could never completely realize the religious conception of perfectly non-violent society which he visualized. But, at the same time, he was convinced that such ideals emerge from the depths of the spiritual nature of man and have a profound significance and reality for him. It is through the inspiration he receives from these ideals that he rises above the level of mere vegetative or animal life to that of man, the Lord of creation. They are his essence as well as destiny:

"The virtue of an ideal consists in its boundlessness. But although religious ideals must, from their very nature, remain unattainable by imperfect human beings, although by virtue of their boundlessness, they may ever seem to recede further away from us, the nearer we go to them, still they are closer to us than our very hands and feet because we are more certain of their reality and truth than even of our physical being. This faith in one's ideal alone constitutes true life. In fact it is man's all in all."<sup>1</sup>

Gandhiji compromised with the circumstances of his time in accepting for an interim period a democratic state instead of a stateless society, controlled economy instead of decentralized rural economy, and trusteeship instead of non-possession. But he took good care to show, by precept and example, the way of preparing by degrees the people of India and of the

<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, 20 December 1937.

world for the ideal society and ideal economy. These ways were threefold. To prepare individual minds for non-violent society he laid the foundation of *Nai Talim*, a new system of education. To let them have a glimpse of actual social life which bore some remote resemblance to non-violent society of his conception, he started in the Indian villages, which were least affected by modern industrial civilization and still retained something of their pristine simplicity, a *Constructive Programme* of moral and economic regeneration. To remove the obstacles which forces of violence put in the way of building a non-violent society, he devised the method of *Satyagraha*. He had no doubt that these three things could, by educating human nature in the right way and creating favourable social conditions, help in building and maintaining a non-violent society.

(I)

Like all religious and moral teachers Gandhiji believed that the only effective way in which social revolution could be brought about was the reforming of the individual. So education has, from the very outset, occupied an important place in his activities. We have seen that he had started his educational experiments in South Africa where he used to teach, with the help of some other friends, the children of the *Satyagraha* volunteers. The broad outline of his educational philosophy, like that of his general philosophy of life, was already complete before he left South Africa for India. Here he continued to take a keen interest in the education of children, and occasionally wrote on educational problems. In 1937, when the Indian National Congress was about to take up the responsibility of government in nine provinces of India, and popular representatives were going to have a hand in shaping the educational policy of the country, Gandhiji wrote a series of articles for their guidance. In the light of the ideas he expressed in these articles, a few distinguished Indian educationists drew up a scheme of primary education, which came to be known as the scheme of Basic National Education. Later,

Gandhiji expressed illuminating ideas about the various aspects of education at all stages, presenting a comprehensive view of national education from his own religious and moral standpoint under the name of *Nai Talim* (new education). Here we will refer only to the basic education part of it, and indicate its relationship with his conception of ideal society.

In respect of its object education is divided into two broad categories—general or liberal education which is or should be given to every individual to cultivate his mind and make him a good and useful member of society; and special education given to particular persons to train them for particular social functions. Gandhiji also makes a distinction between general and special education, but his conception of them is quite different from the conventional idea. According to Western traditions, which have been taken over by our educated classes, general education is the cultivation of the intellect and emotions and its medium is humanities or some mental and social sciences known in academic terminology as arts, while special education is training for a particular vocation or profession or instruction in sciences which help in vocational or professional training. Gandhiji does not accept these definitions. According to him general or liberal education which develops the various capacities of the individual, builds up his personality and trains him to be a healthy member of society, is not solely or mainly the education of the intellect and emotions but that of the whole man—body, mind and soul. And the education of these three is not possible separately but only as a simultaneous and harmonious process:

“I hold that true education of the intellect can only come through a proper exercise and training of bodily organs, e.g. hands, feet, eyes, ears, nose etc. In other words, an intelligent use of the bodily organs in a child provides the best and quickest way of developing his intellect. But unless the development of the mind and body goes hand in hand with a corresponding awakening of the soul, the former alone would prove to be a poor lop-sided affair. By spiritual training I mean education of the heart. A proper and all-round development of the mind, therefore, can take place only when it proceeds *pari*

*passu* with the education of the physical and spiritual faculties of the child. They constitute an indivisible whole. According to this theory, therefore, it would be a gross fallacy to suppose that they can be developed piecemeal or independently of one another."<sup>1</sup>

This liberal education which develops all the best in body, mind and spirit, cannot, according to Gandhiji, be given through the medium of reading and writing, which is confined to the use of intellectual faculties, but by teaching some useful craft scientifically, which involves the simultaneous use of hand, head and heart:

"By education I mean an all-round drawing out of the best in child and man—body, mind and spirit. Literacy is not the end of education nor even the beginning. It is only one of the means whereby man and woman can be educated. Literacy in itself is no education. I would, therefore, begin the child's education by teaching it a useful handicraft . . . . I hold that the highest development of the mind and the soul is possible under such a system of education. Only every handicraft has to be taught not merely mechanically as is done today but scientifically i.e., the child should know the why and wherefore of every process."<sup>2</sup>

Life-long experience as a teacher had convinced Gandhiji that if the craft is taught scientifically it will, among other things, develop the intelligence of the child much more quickly than reading and writing:

"The utterly false idea that intelligence can be developed only through book-reading should give place to the truth that the quickest development of the mind can be achieved by the artisan's work being learnt in a scientific manner. True development of the mind commences immediately the apprentice is taught at every step why a particular manipulation of the hand or a tool is required."<sup>3</sup>

But this should not mislead us to think that Gandhiji wanted to limit the general education of the child to the teaching of

<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, 8 May 1937.

<sup>2</sup> *Harijan*, 31 July 1937.

<sup>3</sup> *Harijan*, 9 January 1937.



craft and regarded reading and writing as unnecessary for the purpose. He was fully aware that book-learning is indispensable not only for intellectual training, but for practical life, and even for spiritual development. Speaking on the education of women he said :

"Although much good and useful work can be done without a knowledge of the three R's, it is my firm belief that we cannot always do without such knowledge. It develops and sharpens one's intellect, and it increases our capacity of doing good. I have never placed an unnecessarily high value on the knowledge of the three R's. I am only attempting to assign its proper place to it. I have pointed out, from time to time, that there is no justification for men to deprive women of, or to deny them, equal rights on the ground of their illiteracy. But education is essential for enabling women to assert these natural rights, to exercise them wisely and to work for their expansion; again the true knowledge of self is unattainable by millions who lack such education. It is no exaggeration to say that a human being without education is not far removed from an animal. Education, therefore, is necessary for women as it is for men."<sup>1</sup>

So Gandhiji wanted to teach children not merely a useful craft but also those subjects of study which are usually included in a syllabus of general education. But his special contribution to educational thought and practice was that he suggested a new method of instruction, giving the craft the central place in the syllabus, and correlating all other subjects with it so that learning and doing, theoretical knowledge and practical activity, should become a simultaneous and harmonious process:

"The scheme that I wish to place before you today is not the teaching of some handicraft side by side with the so-called liberal education. I want that the whole education should be imparted through some handicraft or industry."<sup>2</sup>

"We have up to now concentrated on stuffing children's

<sup>1</sup> Speech delivered on 20 February 1918 published in *Women and Social Injustice*, by M.K.G., Navajivan, 1945. <sup>2</sup> *Harijan*, 30 October 1937:

minds with all kinds of information, without ever thinking of stimulating or developing them. Let us now cry a halt and concentrate on educating the child properly through manual work, not as a side activity, but as the prime means of intellectual training. You have to train the boys in one occupation or another. Round this special occupation you will train up his mind, his body, his hand-writing, his artistic sense and so on."<sup>1</sup>

The main purpose of this basic education in which craft occupies a central place is, of course, educational, that is, "harmonious development of hand, head and heart," but Gandhiji laid no stress on its economic aspect :

"The introduction of manual training will serve a double purpose in a poor country like ours. It will pay for the education of our children and teach them an occupation on which they can fall back in after-life, if they choose."<sup>2</sup>

Of the two economic benefits of craft-centred education, referred to above, Gandhiji attached much greater importance to the first, that is, the self-supporting nature of this education, because he knew that the tens of millions of poor people in India could not meet the expenses of sending their children to schools. Nor could the Government afford to give free education to all. So the only way in which the problem of universal elementary education in this country could be solved, within a reasonable time, was to make education craft-centred, and arrange for the marketing of the products of children's work so that the proceeds might cover at least part of the expenditure on education:

"I am very keen on finding the expenses of a teacher through the product of the manual work of his pupils, because I am convinced that there is no other way to carry education to crores of our children."<sup>3</sup>

Those who are in touch with the latest trends of educational thought, will have no hesitation in admitting that craft-centred education can be an effective medium of intellectual

<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, 18 September 1937.

<sup>2</sup> *Young India*, 1 September 1921.

<sup>3</sup> *Harijan*, 30 October 1937.

training. That this education has some economic significance will also be easily conceded. But its spiritual or moral blessings to which Gandhiji has referred are not so clear and require some explanation.

The experiments of craft-centred Basic Education at Sewagram, Jamia Millia, Delhi, and other private or government institutions in various parts of the country have proved that this education helps in developing some moral qualities, which conventional education does not to the same extent. It has a natural discipline of its own, which is usually self-imposed and not imposed from the outside. Craft soon grips the mind of the child, so that without much effort on the part of the teacher the pupil develops a sense of purpose, concentration, promptness and perseverance. Besides, it involves some processes which require children to work as a team, creating in them the spirit of cooperation instead of competition. Gandhiji must have had all these benefits of Basic Education in mind. But his words that "the highest development of the soul" is possible under this education have a deeper sense.

To understand their full significance we must remember two things. Firstly, that for Gandhiji Bread-Labour was the indispensable condition of spiritual development. So he wanted to teach children from the very beginning that they must repay in productive labour what society contributes towards their maintenance and schooling, so that they are set in the habit of working for their bread and continue to follow this important religious principle throughout their life. From this point of view, craft education has an intrinsic spiritual significance which no other education shares with it. Secondly, Gandhiji thought that making rural crafts an essential part of the education of all children, will help in the great spiritual purpose of converting the present society in which the town exploits the village, into one based on a healthy relationship between the town and the village.

Today, the towns get their food from the villages in return for money which they subsequently drain out of these villages by selling to them goods made in Indian factories or imported

from foreign countries, so that the villages get little return for their labour. They depend for their clothing and other necessities on the towns, so they let themselves be exploited by them. Gandhiji's aim was to replace this economic system by one under which all the basic necessities of life would be produced in the villages, one part of the product would be set apart for meeting local demand, and the rest sent to towns. He wanted to make Basic Education the keystone of the new structure by creating a new mentality in the coming generation. He wanted to inspire them with the spirit and train them in the habit of contributing their quota of constructive labour towards reviving rural industries and making the village self-reliant and prosperous. This selfless social service devoted to a lofty purpose has the greatest spiritual value for Gandhiji. Therefore, Basic Education, which trains children for such services, is to him the medium of "highest spiritual development".

"If the city children are to play their part in this great and noble work of social reconstruction, the vocation through which they are to achieve their education ought to be directly related to the requirements of the villages. So far as I can see, the various processes of cotton manufacture from the ginning and cleaning of cotton to the spinning of yarn answer this test as nothing else does . . . . .

"My plan to impart primary education through the medium of village handicraft like spinning and carding etc., is thus conceived as the spearhead of a silent social revolution fraught with the most far-reaching consequences. It will provide a healthy and moral basis of relationship between the city and the village and will thus go a long way towards eradicating some of the worst evils of the present social insecurity and poisoned relationship between the classes. It will check the progressive decay of our villages and lay the foundation of a juster social order in which there is no unnatural division between the "haves" and the "have-nots" and everybody is assured of a living wage and the right to freedom. And all this would be accomplished without the horror of a bloody class-war or a colonial capital expenditure such as would be

involved in the mechanization of a vast continent like India. Nor would it entail a helpless dependence on foreign imported machinery or technical skill. Lastly, by obviating the necessity of highly specialized talent, it would place the destiny of the masses, as it were, in their own hands."<sup>1</sup>

## (2)

The spiritual significance of craft-centred Basic Education for Gandhiji was that it will include in the minds of the people the dignity of labour, and create in them the urge and the capacity for useful manual work. By acquiring skill in some basic rural craft they will be able to help in revitalising the village and protecting it from the exploitation of the town, so that it achieves social and political freedom and becomes the keystone of the ideal structure of Ramrajya.

But for starting the long and hard campaign of social revolution, Gandhiji was not prepared to wait for the coming up of a new generation trained through Basic Education. He had, with the help of those of his followers who had full faith in his social ideal, drawn up a comprehensive plan for the regeneration of the Indian village, which he modestly called Constructive Programme, and tried to carry out as far as he could. He was quite sure that it would lead one day to *Poorna Swaraj* i.e., the perfectly non-violent and free society of his conception:

"Workers should definitely realize that the constructive programme is the non-violent and truthful way of winning *Poorna Swaraj*. Its wholesale fulfilment is complete independence."<sup>2</sup>

The most effective means of achieving and preserving the desired social order was, according to Gandhiji, Civil Disobedience, the extremest form of *Satyagraha*. But he believed that as armed fighting required training in the use of arms, so did non-violent fighting or *Satyagraha* require training in self-control, self-sacrifice and social service; and this training

<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, 9 October 1937.

<sup>2</sup> *The Hindustan Standard*, 28 October 1944.

could best be given to national workers through the Constructive Programme:

"Just as military training is necessary for armed revolt, training in constructive effort is necessary for civil resistance."<sup>1</sup>

In this Constructive Programme he had included the tackling of all the spiritual, social and economic problems which faced India and which had to be solved before she could achieve freedom and prosperity. He had given the first place to working for communal harmony. The utmost importance which he attached to communal unity was not merely political but above all religious. The essential unity of all religions was a basic principle of his religious creed, and he believed that until this principle was accepted in India and a sense of spiritual unity created in the minds of the followers of all religions, the good and healthy society which he wanted to build could not come into existence:

"Everybody is agreed about the necessity of this unity. But everybody does not know that unity does not mean political unity which may be imposed. It means an unbreakable heart unity. The first thing essential for achieving such unity is, for every Congressman, whatever his religion may be, to represent in his own person, Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Zoroastrian, Jew etc., shortly every Hindu and non-Hindu. He has to feel his identity with everyone of the millions of the inhabitants of Hindustan. In order to realize this every Congressman will cultivate personal friendship with persons representing faiths other than his own. He should *have the same regard for other faiths as for his own.*"<sup>2</sup>

Probably the largest part of his public life was devoted by Gandhiji in the continued effort to check the plague of fanatical communalism which had broken out in India since the beginning of the twentieth century and was threatening to kill her soul. Finally, he succeeded, through the supreme sacrifice of laying down his life, in controlling the pest but not before incalculable damage had been done.

<sup>1</sup> *The Hindustan Standard*, 28 October 1944.

<sup>2</sup> *Constructive Programme, its Meaning and Place*, by M. K. Gandhi, Navajivan Press, March 1948.

Next came the fight against the curse of untouchability. The whole social philosophy of Gandhiji was based on profound sense of the dignity of the individual man. The first and the most tremendous spiritual crisis he went through, which changed the whole course of his life, was the discovery that in South Africa coloured people were despised and humiliated. So the institution of untouchability in India, the worst specimen of social discrimination, was something against which his whole soul revolted. He sympathized with the physical and spiritual isolation of the untouchables, as no one had done since the time of Gautama Buddha. He gave them the beautiful name of Harijan (God's beloved creature), and made it an integral part of his constructive programme to put an end to the practice of untouchability and to give them the same social status as was enjoyed by the so-called higher classes:

"And as far as the Harijans are concerned, every Hindu should make common cause with them and befriend them in their awful isolation—such isolation as perhaps the world has never seen in the monstrous immensity one witnesses in India."<sup>1</sup>

The true followers of Gandhiji responded to his call and fought the demon of untouchability, till it was crippled, if not actually dead.

The third thing which Gandhiji regarded as essential for the self-purification of society was the giving up of all intoxicants. He knew that effective steps to achieve this could only be taken when there was a National Government which could be persuaded to introduce prohibition. But moral principles as well as practical reasons moved him to emphasize that, before Government could successfully enforce prohibition law, constructive workers should carry on a campaign to persuade people to give up the use of intoxicants, so that a favourable atmosphere could be created for prohibition:

"If we are to reach our goal through non-violent effort, we may not leave to the future Government the fate of lakhs of

<sup>1</sup> *Constructive Programme*, by M. K. Gandhi, p. 10.

men and women who are labouring under the curse of incantants and narcotics."<sup>1</sup>

After these three items of purely spiritual and moral reform, the fourth item of the constructive programme is the promotion of *Khadi* (hand-woven and hand-spun cloth), which occupies a central place in the idea of self-sufficient village industrial economy, the basis of Gandhiji's ideal social order. If every village could produce its own cloth just as it produces its own food, it would become self-sufficient in its basic needs and would no longer be exploited by the town. Thus the foundation will be laid of the purely non-violent society based on love and truth which Gandhiji dreamed of. Therefore he regarded *Khadi* as the symbol of India's national unity, freedom and equality, and made its promotion the duty of all patriotic Indians, specially that of constructive workers.

"*Khadi* to me is the symbol of unity of Indian humanity and of its economic freedom and equality and, therefore, ultimately the basis of India's freedom in the poetic words of Jawaharlal Nehru, 'the living soul of India's freedom'."<sup>2</sup>

When Gandhiji took up a task he would plan it and carry it out in every minute detail. So in addition to *Khadi* included in his Constructive Programme the promotion of many minor rural industries, which supply the daily needs of the villagers, such as hand-grinding of corn, pounding of pulses, soap-making, paper-making, match-making, tanning, spinning, pressing etc. He went on adding to this list as or when the need for encouraging or protecting a new industry struck him. So palm-gur making was a later addition. In his last years Gandhiji laid almost as much stress on compost-making as on *Khadi*, because chemical manures were being introduced in India, and he regarded them as injurious to the soil. The cow has the same place in the Indian village economy which the mother has in the home, so *Go-seva* (cow-protection) was also an important part of the Constructive Programme.

Other main items of this programme were:

Village Sanitation, Basic Education and Adult Education

<sup>1</sup> *Constructive Programme*, by M. K. Gandhi, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.



organizing women, workmen and students for the service of the nation as well as the protection of their own rights. It was, in short, a comprehensive plan of voluntary social service and self-help through which Gandhiji was trying to prepare the ground for a silent social revolution, leading to a new social order based on freedom, equality and love. After him, his work is being carried on by a band of his sincere and zealous followers. The leader of this movement, Vinoba Bhave, has linked up with the Constructive Programme a new campaign for *Bhoodan* (persuading land-owners to make gifts of land to landless peasants) and other forms of voluntary surrender of private property to society. We shall refer later to the revolutionary significance of the new movement.

### (3)

Besides the direct help which the Constructive Programme rendered in achieving Gandhiji's social ideal, another great purpose which it served, according to him, was that it trained the workers for *Satyagraha* by creating in them the spirit of service and self-sacrifice, the sense of discipline and organization and the capacity for hard work and perseverance. *Satyagraha* is the most powerful weapon in Gandhiji's armoury of love for fighting the battle of social revolution.

The literal sense of *Satyagraha* is insistence upon truth. Gandhiji used this term for the peculiar method of upholding truth and justice and resisting untruth and injustice, which he had used in public life on such a vast scale for the first time in history. The essence of this method is winning the heart of the opponent by spiritual force instead of defeating him by physical force; awakening in him the sentiments of love and humanity by cheerfully going through voluntary suffering. Gandhiji has expressed his idea of *Satyagraha* through a beautiful metaphor:

"When I was a little child, there used to be two blind master-performers in Rajkot. One of them was a musician. When he played on his instruments, his fingers swept the strings with unerring instinct and everybody listened spellbound to

his playing. Similarly there are chords in every heart. If we only know how to strike the right chord, we bring out the music."<sup>1</sup>

We have referred in the first chapter to the distinction which Gandhiji made between the evil forces and the so-called evil persons. He held that in fighting evil or injustice, people make the mistake of thinking that their enemy was the man who did them harm or injustice, whereas the real enemies were the forces of evil or injustice. Man was merely their instrument. These evil forces existed, in the form of uncontrolled violent passions or desires, or in the form of fear and cowardice, both in the oppressor and the oppressed. The oppressed person has to fight these forces first in himself and then in the oppressor. When he has succeeded through proper discipline and training in controlling his own violent passions which keep his finer human feelings suppressed, he releases in himself sentiments of sympathy and love, investing his personality with harmony and grace and with a subtle charm which is a potent spiritual force. The use of this soul-force in resisting evil or injustice is called *Satyagraha*. It can "strike the right chord" in the heart of the oppressor. It can restrain his anger, hatred and selfishness, and give free play to his sense of justice, love and self-sacrifice.

Gandhiji began his experiments in *Satyagraha* in 1907 in South Africa and brought it to its climax on 30th January, 1948. During this period he carried on, with hundreds of thousands of patriotic Indians, a non-violent fight against the British Government which was till then the greatest power on earth. After all these years of suffering and sacrifice he succeeded in liberating his country and, by the last supreme sacrifice, in making the shaky roots of free India firm and secure. As far as we know these experiments had no parallel in history. Today when the world, having reached the most extreme limits of violence that can be conceived, is on the brink of the bottomless pit of self-destruction, it is worthwhile to make a careful study of the only successful experiment

<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, 27 May 1939.

carried on in our time of fighting violence by peaceful means. Clearly, war after the invention of A-Bomb and H-Bomb means total annihilation of the human race. So if the world has a mind to live a little longer, it has to find some moral equivalent for war, which can be used to settle inter-communal and inter-national disputes. Gandhiji claimed to have discovered such an equivalent, and actually used it successfully in settling the dispute between the Indian nation and the British Government. The spirit of scientific inquiry as well as the instinct of self-preservation should urge upon us the necessity of studying the nature and the potentialities of Gandhian *Satyagraha*.

The limited scope of this book does not allow us to discuss fully the principles and technique of *Satyagraha*. We must content ourselves with giving a brief outline under the following heads :

- A. The nature of *Satyagraha*
- B. The objects for which it can be offered
- C. The persons qualified to offer it
- D. The training of *Satyagrahis*
- E. The technique of *Satyagraha*

A. As the outward form of *Satyagraha* resembles passive resistance, which is sometimes used in political movements, superficial observers think the two are identical. But really there is a world of difference between them. Passive resistance, as its name suggests, is a passive state in which an individual or a group of individuals is content with protecting itself against some wrong or injustice. *Satyagraha* or non-cooperation is the active state in which the oppressed person or group strives by non-violent means to change the sentiments, ideas and temperament of the oppressor, or an oppressive law or an unjust form of government:

"Non-cooperation is not a passive state, it is an intensely active state—more active than physical resistance or violence. Passive resistance is a misnomer."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Young India*, 25 August 1920.

The motive behind passive resistance is belief in our own right, whereas *Satyagraha* is motivated by an unshakable faith in the eternal law of truth and justice, which makes us conscious of our duty to oppose unjust laws or institutions and gives us the courage to defy them:

“Disobedience to the law of the State becomes a peremptory duty when it comes in conflict with the law of God.”<sup>1</sup>

The real object of passive resistance is to make trouble for the opponent so as to get him into a corner, though it may cost some suffering to ourselves. But *Satyagraha* has the sole object of touching the heart of the opponent by subjecting ourselves to silent, patient and cheerful suffering:

“In passive resistance there is always present an idea of harassing the other party and there is a simultaneous readiness to undergo any hardships entailed upon us by such activity; while in *Satyagraha* there is not the remotest idea of injuring the opponent, *Satyagraha* postulates the conquest of the adversary by suffering in one's own person.”<sup>2</sup>

“It is never the intention of the *Satyagrahis* to embarrass the wrong-doer. The appeal is never to his fear. It must be and is always to his heart. The *Satyagrahi's* object is to convert, not to coerce the wrong-doer.”<sup>3</sup>

*Satyagraha* is not something negative or transient like passive resistance, but the expression of an everlasting sentiment of love for humanity including our opponents:

“Passive resistance is a negative thing, and has nothing to do with the active principles of love. *Satyagraha* proceeds on the active principles of love which says ‘Love those that spitefully use you. It is easy for you to love friends. But I say unto you, love your enemies.’ ”<sup>4</sup>

As *Satyagraha* springs from love, it urges upon us to have courteous regard for our opponent, to respect his point of view, to credit him with good intentions and good faith and to be polite and patient in dealing with him :

<sup>1</sup> *Ethical Religion* by M. K. Gandhi, Ganesan, Madras, 1930, p. 45.

<sup>2</sup> *Selections from Gandhi* by N. K. Bose, Navajivan Press, 1948, p. 145.

<sup>3</sup> *Harijan*, 25 March 1939. <sup>4</sup> *Harijan*, 14 November 1938.

"Our motto must ever be conversion by gentle persuasion and constant appeal to the head and heart. We must, therefore, be ever curious and patient with those who do not see eye to eye with us. We must resolutely refuse to consider our opponents as enemies of the country."<sup>1</sup>

*B. Satyagraha* is a spiritual force springing from the depths of moral and religious consciousness. It cannot, like a physical or mechanical force, act independently of the moral character of the object for which it is used. We can put it to effective use only when we are fully convinced that our cause is right and just:

"There can be no *Satyagraha* for an unjust cause."<sup>2</sup>

"Non-violence in the very nature of things is of no assistance in the defence of ill-gotten gains or immoral acts."<sup>3</sup>

*C.* Those who do not understand the real nature of *Satyagraha* are apt to think that it can be offered by all persons at all times provided the cause is just. For example, if people in one part of the world are oppressed, it is open to people in the neighbouring region or for that matter of fact in any part of the world, to offer *Satyagraha* in support of the cause of the victims of oppression. But, Gandhiji had learnt from his life-long experience that the campaign of *Satyagraha* could only succeed if it was launched by the oppressed people themselves. Not that it is morally wrong for us to offer *Satyagraha* as an expression of our love and sympathy for our downtrodden brethren in any part of the world, but in practice it is ineffective. For the magic of *Satyagraha* works on oppressors or wrong-doers in three ways. Firstly, they see that the victims of their oppression offering *Satyagraha* suffer in silence, but do not yield to injustice, and it wins their respect. Secondly, they feel that in spite of all their suffering the *Satyagrahis* do not entertain the slightest hatred for their oppressors but actually love them, and it stirs the dormant sentiments of love as well as the sense of justice in their own hearts. Thirdly, they realize that the wrong which they intend to do cannot be

<sup>1</sup> *Young India*, 29 September 1921.

<sup>2</sup> *Young India*, 27 April 1921.

<sup>3</sup> *Harijan*, 5 September 1936.

fully implemented if the intended victims refuse to cooperate with them in any shape or form. In all the three cases the effect of *Satyagraha* depends on the victims themselves rising in revolt and starting a non-violent fight against their oppressors:

"It is the essence of *Satyagraha* that those who are suffering should alone offer it. Cases can be conceived in which what may be called sympathetic *Satyagraha* may be applied. The idea underlying *Satyagraha* is to convert the wrong-doer, to awaken the sense of justice in him, to show him also that without the cooperation, direct or indirect of the wronged, the wrong-doer cannot do the wrong intended by him. If the people in either case are not ready to suffer for their cause, no outside help in the shape of *Satyagraha* can bring them deliverance."<sup>1</sup>

"Only those who suffer from a wrong should offer resistance against it. Do not count on outside help. It fails in the last resort. In the final heat, one has to rely on oneself of the justice of one's cause, or on truth and God, as some would prefer to say."

D. *Satyagraha* can be individual or collective. Individual *Satyagraha* is usually offered in the way of fasting, but it has also taken, in a few cases, the form of civil disobedience. Collective *Satyagraha* or mass *Satyagraha* can be offered through *hartal* (suspension of work, closing of shops), *dharna* (sit-down protest), picketing, and refusing to pay taxes, but its most common form is civil disobedience.

In any of these forms, *Satyagraha*, with all its implications, is a novel variety of war, which is fought not with physical force but with "soul-force". Even the old type of war in which conventional weapons are used requires an elaborate training. Far more elaborate and thorough must be the training for the new style of war:

"If the method of violence takes plenty of training the method of non-violence takes much more training and that training is much more difficult than the training for violence."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, "Method of Non-violence", 10 December 1938.

<sup>2</sup> *Harijan*, 14 May 1938.

All this training is needed because the mental state of non-violence or *Satyagraha* involves not only the difficult task of controlling the strong passions of anger, hatred, revenge, fear, but also the almost superhuman feat of respecting and loving one's enemy. It is a state in which the mind abstains from violent thoughts, the tongue from violent words and the hand from violent deeds. It comes after one has passed through the most rigid discipline and the hardest moral conflicts. Without this state of mind mere outward non-violence is apt to produce psychological and spiritual distemper, which is dangerous for the *satyagrahi* himself as well as for others:

"It takes a fairly strenuous course of training to attain to a mental state of non-violence . . . . . Unless there is hearty cooperation of the mind, their mere outward observance will be simply a mask harmful to the man himself and others: The perfect state is reached only when mind and body and speech are in proper coordination. But it is a case of intense moral struggle."<sup>1</sup>

*Satyagraha*, according to Gandhiji, requires a two-fold preparation—the general religious and moral discipline necessary for every member of human society, and the special practical training given to *satyagrahis* as pioneers of non-violent social revolution. The first kind of training was provided at the *ashrams* (religious seminaries) which Gandhiji established in South Africa and subsequently in India before launching his campaign of civil disobedience, and consisted in the practice of the five cardinal virtues—Truth, Non-violence, Temperance, Non-possession and Bread-Labour as well as other great moral qualities like fearlessness and humility. The other kind of training was given to the soldiers of *Satyagraha* who had already passed through the *ashram* discipline by sending them out to the villages for field work in connection with the Constructive Programme. This provided a fuller opportunity of developing in them responsibility, punctuality, intelligence, initiative, tact, prudence and thoroughness.

For individual *Satyagraha* Gandhiji put greater emphasis

<sup>1</sup> *Young India*, 1 October 1931.

on a thorough training than for mass *Satyagraha*. Individual *satyagrahis* had to do everything on their own responsibility and initiative. Therefore, Gandhiji insisted that it should be undertaken only by those who had thoroughly received the two-fold training. But, in mass *Satyagraha*, if the leader is initiated in the principles and practice of non-violence, he can work, if necessary, even with a band of followers who do not accept non-violence as a creed but only as a policy; who are not trained in its technique but follow its moral principles under the direction of the leader. But if he can get in addition to those political "*satyagrahis*", a few persons who have complete faith in *Satyagraha* and are fully trained for it then the movement acquires greater momentum. Such was the non-violent army with the help of which Gandhiji fought India's battle for freedom:

"I adhere to the opinion that I did well to present to the Congressmen non-violence as an expedient. I could not have done otherwise if I was to introduce it into politics. In South Africa, too, I introduced it as an expedient. It was successful there because resisters were a small number in a compact area and therefore easily controlled. Here we had numberless men scattered over a huge country. The result was that they could not be easily controlled or trained. And yet it is a marvel the way they have responded. They might have responded much better and shown far better results. If I had started with men who accepted non-violence as a creed, I might have ended with myself. Imperfect man as I am, I started with imperfect men and women and sailed on an unchartered ocean. Thank God that though this boat has not reached its haven, it has proved fairly storm-proof."<sup>1</sup>

Five years after Gandhiji wrote this, the boat reached its haven. India won her freedom.

In view of this marvellous achievement, it would be sheer prejudice to dismiss off-hand Gandhiji's claim that if a considerable number of people have firm faith in non-violence and have been thoroughly trained over a long period in the

<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, 12 April 1942.



technique of *Satyagraha*, they can easily resist without arms the aggressive invasion of a foreign army.

E. About the technique of *Satyagraha* Gandhiji has given detailed instructions on various occasions which have been adequately dealt with by several writers. We will give here only a few maxims which show that he lays equal emphasis on both aspects of this non-violent struggle—moral purity as well as strategic and tactical skill.

- (1) Civil resistance should be resorted to only after all other attempts at honourable settlement, including an offer of impartial arbitration, have failed.
- (2) Adequate propaganda is an integral part of *Satyagraha*.
- (3) The *satyagrahi* should preserve the initiative in his own hands and not allow it to pass in the hands of his opponent.
- (4) He must refuse to be led by the masses against the prompting of his own judgment.
- (5) Keep the demand low but consistent with Truth and Justice. In aiming beyond our capacity we are likely to lose all.
- (6) *Satyagraha* should be progressive in character.
- (7) There should be no impatience, no hurry, no bluff and no attempt to cover inner weakness from oneself. Non-cooperation is not a movement of brag, bluster or bluff. It is a test of our sincerity. It requires silent and solid self-sacrifice.
- (8) Always seek avenues of cooperation with the enemy on honourable terms. The end of non-violent war is always an agreed solution in conformity with claims of justice and true human welfare.
- (9) In negotiation do not surrender essentials. Sacrifice non-essentials. Be prepared to go to the farthest length in self-suffering in defence of the essential. Before settlement, there must be an agreement on fundamentals. "Keep one angle of the square right, the rest will follow."

## CHAPTER V

### MODERN HUMANISM

#### *The Moral and Spiritual Ideas of Nehru*

ACCORDING to Jawaharlal Nehru, "The modern mind, that is to say the better type of modern mind, is practical and pragmatic, ethical and social, altruistic and humanitarian. It is governed by a practical idealism for social betterment. Humanity is its God and social service its religion."<sup>1</sup>

From this way of thinking which he calls "scientific humanism" he derives his own view of life. Here the word 'scientific' may be in place in the sense that this philosophy of life attaches great importance to science, but it is apt to mislead us by suggesting that the fundamental ideas of this philosophy are based on scientific observation and experiment, whereas they are, like all philosophy, rooted in faith or intuition, as we shall see when we examine them in detail. So the term "modern" seems to us to be more appropriate than "scientific" for this humanistic trend of thought.

Like Gandhiji, Nehru had an inquiring mind and the range of his studies was much wider. Passionately fond of books, he had found time in the midst of all the stress and strain within and without, to read the important works of many great thinkers of East and West. He was no doubt influenced by some of them but did not borrow his overall conception of life from any of them. His philosophy of life, rough and ready though it may be, was hammered out of his own personal experience and observation. So the same method seems to be suitable for studying it as we adopted for Gandhiji's thought. We shall first see how his fundamental ideas developed through the interplay of thought and action, and then try to present them in a more or less systematic form.

<sup>1</sup> *The Discovery of India* by Jawaharlal Nehru, Signet Press, Calcutta, 1946, p. 680.

## (I)

We have referred to the first effect of the impact of Western Culture on India in the shape of religious reform. But Indian mind is not all religious. It has a secular side too. Along with a yearning for eternal rest and peace it has also an urge for movement, change, progress. In Nehru's words:

"A nation, like an individual, has many personalities, many approaches to life . . . . . In India from the earliest days there was a search for those basic principles for the unchanging, the universal, the absolute. Yet the dynamic outlook was also present and an appreciation of life and the changing world. On these foundations a stable and progressive society was built up."<sup>1</sup>

This other, dynamic and secular personality of India, had, in a subtle way, begun to be influenced by Western Culture as early as the 18th century. But this influence made itself felt towards the end of the 19th century when it brought into being the great political and social movements like the Indian National Congress and the Servants of India Society. Although in those days no movement in India could be without a religious tinge, on the whole, these two associations were non-religious and represented the response made by the secular Indian mind to the challenge of Western Culture.

The dynamic secular spirit of India was reflected even in the mystic mind of Tagore and the prophetic mind of Gandhi, but it manifested itself almost in its pure form in Jawaharlal Nehru. Yet we must remember that India is a land where a mysterious religious influence pervades the whole atmosphere. Even her secular personality represented by Nehru was imbued with a deep religiousness.

The environment of the family in which Nehru passed his childhood was very unfavourable for religious education. The male members of the family, whom he regarded worthy of emulation, showed an indifference towards religion, which is even more harmful to the growth of religious sentiment in the child than opposition:

<sup>1</sup> *Discovery of India*, p. 615.

"Of religion I had very hazy notions. It seemed to be a woman's affair. Father and my older cousins treated the question humorously and refused to take it seriously."<sup>1</sup>

But some spark of religious sense must have been lurking in his mind which flared up at the age of eleven at the contact of his Irish tutor, F.T. Brooks. Brooks was an ardent believer in the new cult of Theosophy and used to hold an assembly of Theosophists at his room every week. The young Nehru was deeply influenced by these meetings at which he used to be present:

"For the first time I began to think consciously and deliberately, of religion and other worlds. The Hindu religion especially went up in my estimation; not the ritual or ceremonial part but its great books the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagwad Gita* . . . . . Mrs. Annie Besant visited Benares in those days and delivered several addresses on Theosophical subjects. I was deeply moved by her oratory and returned from her speeches dazed and as in a dream . . . . I decided to join the Theosophical Society although I was only thirteen then."<sup>2</sup>

A religiousness so intense at such an early age was of course a temporary phase which soon passed. But it left its impressions upon him:

"Soon after F. T. Brooks left me I lost touch with Theosophy and in a remarkably short time (partly because I went to school in England) Theosophy left my life completely. But I have no doubt that those days with F. T. Brooks have left a deep impress on me and I feel that I owe a debt to him and to Theosophy."<sup>3</sup>

It was F. T. Brooks who infected young Nehru with an enthusiasm for the study of English literature, awakened the keen interest in science, which was latent in him, and gave it the right direction. In our country students studied science merely to get through examinations or, at best, for storing up as much theoretical information as they could, and this attitude does not seem to have changed since. But under Brooks'

<sup>1</sup> *An Autobiography* by Jawaharlal Nehru, John Lane, the Bodley Head, London, 1936, p. 8.    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.    <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

guidance, Nehru interested himself in the practical, no less than in the theoretical, aspect of science which played an important part in shaping his mind:

"Brooks also initiated me into the mysteries of science. We rigged up a little laboratory and there I used to spend long and interesting hours working out experiments in elementary physics and chemistry."<sup>1</sup>

Two other dominating traits could be noticed in him at that time. One of these was his sense of fairplay and sympathy for the under-dog. Though he deeply revered his father, a man of great moral and intellectual calibre, and stood in awe of him, he was filled with righteous indignation when the father was too harsh in his treatment of domestic servants:

"I admired father tremendously. He seemed to me the embodiment of strength and courage and cleverness . . . . But much as I admired him and loved him I feared him also. I had seen him losing temper at servants and others and he seemed to me terrible then and I shivered with fright, mixed sometimes with resentment, at the treatment of a servant."<sup>2</sup>

The other was the keen interest he took in important political happenings in the world. After relating Theosophical experiments in his autobiography, he says:

"The next important event that I remember was the Russo-Japanese War. Japanese victories stirred up my enthusiasm and I waited eagerly for the papers for fresh news."<sup>3</sup>

The Russo-Japanese war had made great stir in India, and educated people were generally much excited about it. But a boy of fourteen or fifteen being so keenly interested in a foreign war that he waited restlessly for the latest news, was something uncommon in our country half a century ago, and shows that Nehru's interest in world politics was not temporary or accidental.

In the sixteenth year of his life (1905) Nehru was sent to the famous public school at Harrow in England. In the new atmosphere, while the religious bias which had manifested itself in his passion for Theosophy withered away, his interest

<sup>1</sup> *An Autobiography*, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

in politics flourished. In a few months he had learnt so much about the current political affairs that he astonished his teachers:

"I was greatly interested in the General Election, which took place, as far as I remember, at the end of 1905 and which ended in a great liberal victory. Early in 1906 our form master asked us about the new Government and, much to his surprise, I was the only boy in his form who could give him much information on the subject, including almost a complete list of members of Campbell-Bannerman Government."<sup>1</sup>

After some time the study of the history of Italy's struggle for independence, and that of Garibaldi's life and thought switched his interest on the freedom movement in his own motherland. Though in those days his attitude towards life was that of superficial hedonism, the solid moral substance under the surface created in him the urge for a higher purpose—the freedom of India. Speaking of the effect which Garibaldi's writings had on him, he says:

"Visions of similar deeds in India came before me, of a gallant fight for freedom."<sup>2</sup>

The practical idealism, which was characteristic of him even at this early age, did not allow him to indulge in mere dreams, but urged him to translate his dreams into action:

"Indian politics in 1907 and 1908 were in a state of upheaval and I wanted to play a brave part in them."<sup>3</sup>

When, after completing his studies at Harrow and Cambridge and taking his degree in Natural Sciences, Nehru had to spend two years in London for his legal studies, his interest in politics increased further. This was the time when the Fabian Society in London was trying to cast the idea of Socialism into the mould of the British mind. Nehru was attracted by this movement, but his real interest lay in the political question of Ireland, which was struggling for its freedom like India:

"I simply drifted, doing some general reading, vaguely attracted to the Fabians and socialistic ideas, and interested in the political movements of the day. Ireland and the woman

<sup>1</sup> *An Autobiography*, p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

suffrage movement interested me especially. I remember also how, during a visit to Ireland in the summer of 1910, the early beginnings of Sinn Fein had attracted me.”<sup>1</sup>

We have said that Nehru had since his very childhood a passion for science. At Cambridge his mind was trained through Natural Sciences, which produced a limited scientific point of view, limited in the sense that the spirit of critical inquiry was accompanied by a certain dogmatism and not consistent with truly scientific attitude of mind. This dogmatism was not merely due to the vanity of youth, but also to the unscientific self-complacency from which science itself suffered in those days :

“I was influenced by my scientific studies in the University and had some of the assurance which science then possessed. For the science of the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, unlike that of today, was very sure of itself.”<sup>2</sup>

In 1912 Nehru came back to Allahabad and started legal practice. But the urge for national freedom did not let him rest. He joined the Indian National Congress and became a zealous member of the Home Rule League, but was not quite satisfied with either of the two. His enterprising nature spurned mere political agitation and demanded more extreme and effective action:

“I felt that both individual and national honour demanded a more aggressive and fighting attitude to foreign rule.”<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, though Nehru’s socialist tendencies seemed to have been overcome by his nationalism, yet they were struggling with it under the surface and asserted themselves on occasions :

“I was a pure nationalist, my vague socialist ideas of college days having sunk into the background . . . and yet fresh reading was again stirring the embers of socialistic ideas in my head.”<sup>4</sup>

After the First World War the advent of Gandhiji into Indian politics transformed the national movement. From

<sup>1</sup> *An Autobiography*, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21-2.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

mere political agitation of the educated middle class it turned into a mass movement of direct action. In 1919 Gandhiji set up the *Satyagraha Sabha* for offering non-violent resistance to the Rowlatt Bills and announced that if the Bills were passed, the people would deliberately disobey the acts embodying them and, if necessary, other unjust laws. Nehru had got his heart's desire:

"When I first read about this proposal in the newspapers my reaction was one of tremendous relief . . . . I was afire with enthusiasm and wanted to join the *Satyagraha Sabha* immediately."<sup>1</sup>

Now a conflict between love and duty started in the minds of Jawaharlal Nehru and his father Pandit Motilal Nehru which is full of pathetic interest. Love dominating the heart of the father strove to keep the son away from the dangers of revolutionary politics. Duty to the motherland urged the son to drag the father along with him into the midst of these very dangers. Victory came to the son, as he had on his side the new spirit of freedom which no patriotic Indian could resist. The old Nehru threw himself, like the young Nehru, heart and soul into the non-cooperation movement and proved to be a tower of strength to Gandhiji.

While working for the non-cooperation movement, Jawaharlal Nehru had a spiritual experience which transformed his love of freedom and his sense of service into a passion, and he made the political and economic liberation of India the sacred mission of his life. This was the result of his contact with the Indian peasant whose lot had become worse and worse under the British rule till he was on the verge of destitution. In those days an illiterate villager, Ramchandra, had organized the peasants in some districts of Oudh for a campaign of protest against injustice and indignity, meted out to them by the landlord and the government. Some workers of this movement persuaded Nehru and his associates to go to the villages and see with their own eyes the plight of the peasants. This tour of rural India, the first of an endless series, had so profound

<sup>1</sup> *An Autobiography*, p. 41.



an effect on Nehru that the whole course and complexion of his life was changed:

"They showered their affection on us and looked on us with loving and hopeful eyes, as if we were the bearers of good tidings, the guides who were to lead them to the promised land. Looking at them and their misery and their overflowing gratitude, I was filled with shame and sorrow, shame at my own easygoing and comfortable life and our petty politics of the city which ignored the vast multitude of semi-naked sons and daughters of India, sorrow at the degradation and overwhelming poverty of India. A new picture of India seemed to rise before us, casual visitors from the distant city, embarrassed me and filled me with a new responsibility that frightened me."<sup>1</sup>

Going through the fire of love turned the iron ore that was Nehru into steel, pure and true :

"It was the hottest time of the year, June, just before the monsoon. The sun scorched and blinded. I was quite unused to going out in the sun and ever since my return from England I had gone to the hills for parts of every summer. And now I was wandering about all day in the open sun with not even a sun-hat, my head being wrapped in a small towel. So full was I of other matters that I quite forgot about the heat."<sup>2</sup>

To the patriotic sense of love and service Gandhiji's precept and example had imparted the intensity, depth and power of religious emotion :

"Many of us who worked for the Congress Programme lived in a kind of intoxication in 1912. We were full of excitement and optimism and a buoyant enthusiasm. We sensed the happiness of a person crusading for a cause. We were not troubled with doubts and hesitation ; our path seemed to lie clear in front of us and we marched ahead . . . .<sup>3</sup> We were proud of our leader and of the unique method he had evolved and often we indulged in fits of self-righteousness. In the midst of strife and while we ourselves encouraged strife, we had a sense of inner peace."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *An Autobiography*, p. 52.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

But the innate critical tendency in Nehru, sharpened by his scientific education and the influence of Western mind into an analytical way of thinking, was still at work. He was troubled by the thought that the inroad of religion into politics under Gandhiji's leadership was encouraging the reactionary movement of revivalism:

"Gandhiji, indeed, was continually laying stress on the religious and spiritual side of the movement. His religion was not dogmatic but it did mean a definitely religious outlook on life, and the whole movement was strongly influenced by this and took on a revivalist character as far as the masses were concerned . . . . . I used to be troubled sometimes at the growth of this religious element in our politics both on the Hindu and Muslim side. I did not like it at all. Much that Moulvies and Maulanas and Swamis and the like said in their public addresses seemed to me most unfortunate. Their history and sociology and economics seemed to me all wrong."<sup>1</sup>

But the magic influence of Gandhiji's personality brought even the critical and analytical mind of Nehru under the sway of religion:

"As for Gandhiji himself he was a very difficult person to understand. Sometimes his language was almost incomprehensible to an average modern. But we felt that we knew him quite well enough to realise that he was a great and unique man and a glorious leader, and having put our faith in him, we gave him almost a blank cheque . . . . . many of us, however, were too much under his influence in political matters to remain wholly immune even in the sphere of religion. Where a direct attack might not have succeeded, many an indirect approach went a long way to undermine the defences. The outward ways of religion did not appeal to me, and above all I disliked the exploitation of the people by the so-called men of religion, but still I toned down towards it. I came nearer a religious frame of mind in 1921 than at any other time since my early boyhood. Even so I did not come very near."<sup>2</sup>

The last sentence shows Nehru himself did not realize that

<sup>1</sup> *An Autobiography*, p. 72.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.

he was not only very near religion but actually immersed in it. When he disclaims nearness to religion he uses the word in its narrow conventional sense. For the creed which he professed in those days had practically all the elements of what Gandhiji regarded as true religion:

"What I admired was the moral and ethical side of our movement and of satyagraha. I did not give an absolute allegiance to the doctrine of non-violence or accept it for ever, but it attracted me more and more, and the belief grew upon me that, situated as we were in India and with our background and traditions, it was the right policy for us. The spiritualization of politics, using the word not in its narrow religious sense, seemed to me a fine idea. A worthy end should have worthy means leading upto it. That seemed not only a good ethical doctrine but sound, practical politics, for the means that are not good often defeat the end in view and raise new problems and difficulties. And then it seemed so unbecoming, so degrading to the self-respect of an individual or a nation to submit to such means, to go through the mire. How can one escape being sullied by it? How can we march ahead swiftly and with dignity if we stoop or crawl?

"Such were my thoughts then. And the non-cooperation movement offered me what I wanted—the goal of national freedom (as I thought) the ending of the exploitation of the underdog, and the means which satisfied my moral sense and gave me a sense of personal freedom. So great was the personal satisfaction that even a possibility of failure did not count for much, for such failure could only be temporary. I did not understand or feel drawn to the metaphysical part of the Bhagwad Gita, but I liked to read the verses—recited every evening in Gandhiji's ashram prayers—which say what a man should be like: Calm of purpose, serene and unmoved, doing his job and not caring over much for the result of his action. Not being very calm or detached myself, I suppose this ideal appealed to me all the more."<sup>1</sup>

It is not possible to conceive a more religious frame of mind

<sup>1</sup> *An Autobiography*, pp. 73-4.

for one whose innate disposition was not religious but intellectual and pragmatic. It comprehended almost everything that Gandhiji valued as the essence of religion. The only thing lacking was a theoretical belief in God and *ahimsa*. But considering that Nehru admired the methods of *ahimsa* which the non-cooperation movement was following, liked the "spiritualization" of politics, and was undaunted by failure as he believed that those non-violent methods must ultimately lead to success, it can safely be said that he had a firm practical faith, which made up, at least from Gandhiji's point of view, for his lack of belief in formal religion.

Upto that time Nehru, like many Congressmen with modern education, differed from Gandhiji only in one essential point of economic and cultural policy:

"Few of us I think agreed with Gandhiji's idea about machinery and modern civilization."<sup>1</sup>

It was in 1922, when Gandhiji suspended the *Satyagraha* movement that Nehru's faith in Gandhiji's leadership received its first jolt:

"We were angry when we learnt of this stoppage of our struggle at a time when we seemed to be consolidating our position and advancing on all fronts."<sup>2</sup>

Later, Nehru felt that Gandhiji's decision was sound from the moral as well as practical point of view. Still, he could not reconcile himself with the way Gandhiji had enforced this decision abruptly without consulting his colleagues and securing the agreement of the rank and file of Congressmen:

"It may be that the decision to suspend civil resistance in 1922 was a right one, though the manner of doing it left much to be desired and brought about a certain demoralization."<sup>3</sup>

Since 1922, Nehru felt on the one hand more and more dissatisfied with some of Gandhiji's ideals and, on the other hand, more and more attracted by his personality. This conflict was partly due to the fact that Nehru's public and private life was passing through a period of storm and stress, which reflected itself in the general development of his philosophy

<sup>1</sup> *An Autobiography*, p. 76.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86.

of life. It was the time when a sensitive soul like his had to go through long terms of imprisonment, under conditions as distressing and degrading for political prisoners as for common felons, to bear the pangs of grief caused by his loving father's demise and his beloved wife's lingering death, and to face serious financial difficulties and worries. In public life, he had to witness the changing phases of the ebb and flow, the elation and depression of the national movement, the political method of ruthless repression and shameless allurements adopted by his opponents, and the heroic deeds and petty squabbles of his comrades. But far more violent than the tumult outside was the tempest raging in Nehru's own breast. He was in those days struggling to adjust himself to three currents in public life of the country which would sometimes move together and sometimes apart from one another:

- (1) the moral and spiritual movement which had arisen from the depths of India's heart and was personified in Gandhiji.
- (2) the vague urge for national freedom which kept the National Congress on the march without a definite idea of its goal.
- (3) the yearning for intellectual and social revolution, inspired mainly by the modernist and socialist trends of the West in Nehru himself and many other young men.

On the whole Nehru agreed and worked heart and soul with Gandhiji and the Congress. But there were occasions when he strongly differed from one or both of them. In spite of this, personal attachment, as well as national interest, did not allow him to break with either, and he would always manage somehow to come to a compromise. This conflict between expediency on the one side and the dictates of his conscience on the other was trying enough. But even more distressing to him was the feeling that there was no harmony yet in his own thought, temperament and personality. Nehru himself describes the state of his mind in the years following 1922 in these words:

"I occupied myself with many activities and sought thereby to keep away from the problems that troubled me. But there was no escape from them, no getting away from the questions that were always being formed in my mind and to which I could find no satisfactory answer . . . . . I found now many changes that I had not so far noticed, new ideas, new conflicts, and instead of light I saw a growing confusion. My faith in Gandhiji's leadership remained, but I began to examine some parts of his programme more critically. But he was in prison and beyond our reach, and his advice could not be taken. Neither of the two Congress Parties then functioning—the Council party and the No-changers attracted me."<sup>1</sup>

In 1923, during the serious illness caused by the extreme hardships suffered in the Nabha Jail, Nehru passed through a spiritual crisis which left him in a state of outward calm. But the conflict in the mind persisted:

"I was lifted out of the emotional atmosphere of our politics and could view the objectives and the springs that had moved me to action more clearly. With this clarification came further questioning to which I had no satisfactory answer. But more and more I moved away from the religious outlook on life and politics."<sup>2</sup>

The questions which were troubling him had to do with the shape of things to come in India. He wanted to have a more or less definite idea of the form and content of the freedom for which the country was fighting, that is to say, of the political, social and economic systems to be adopted by India. But Gandhiji regarded these questions as premature. He thought that the real thing was to create in the people the true religious and moral spirit and to embody it into sound national character. Once that was done a good society or state would automatically follow. As for the Congress, its prudent leaders probably wanted to avoid discussing these questions lest they give rise to internal differences and thus break the united front, while the bulk of Congressmen did not feel the necessity of bothering about these things. They took it for granted that mere en-

<sup>1</sup> *An Autobiography*, p. 104.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134.

enthusiasm and sincerity will remove all difficulties and solve all problems:

"Gandhiji's stress was never on the intellectual approach to a problem but on character and piety. He did succeed amazingly in giving backbone and character to the Indian people . . . . It was this extraordinary stiffening-up of the masses, that filled us with confidence. A demoralized, backward, and broken-up people suddenly straightened their backs and lifted their heads and took part in disciplined, joint action on a country-wide scale. This action itself, we felt, would give irresistible power to the masses. We ignored the necessity of thought behind the action; we forgot that without a conscious ideology and objective the energy and enthusiasm of the masses must end largely in smoke."<sup>1</sup>

Nehru himself did have a vague idea of the objective :

"If there is no common national or social outlook, there will not be common action against the common adversary. If we think in terms of the existing economic and political structure and merely wish to tamper with it here and there, to reform it, to 'Indianize' it, then all real inducement for joint action is lacking. The time had gone when any political or economic or communal problem in India could be satisfactorily solved by reformist methods. Revolutionary outlook and planning and revolutionary solutions were demanded by the situation."<sup>2</sup>

In March, 1926, Nehru went to Europe for the treatment of his ailing wife. There he studied the political situation very closely and carefully. He saw that socialism, which in the days of his earlier sojourn in Europe as a student was a limited intellectual movement, had now become a real political force. He attended the Congress of Oppressed Nationalities at Brussels and the tenth anniversary celebrations of the Soviets in Moscow, and met socialists and revolutionaries from all over the world. In December, 1927, he came back, refreshed and invigorated to India with a comparatively clear idea of his political and social objectives:

<sup>1</sup> *An Autobiography*, p. 76.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 137.

"I felt full of energy and vitality, and the sense of inner conflict and frustration that had oppressed me so often previously, was, for the time being, absent. My outlook was wider, and nationalism by itself seemed to me definitely a narrow and insufficient creed. Political freedom, and independence, were no doubt essential, but they were steps only in the right direction; without social freedom and a social structure of society and the State, neither the country nor the individual could develop much . . . . . I came back with the conviction that . . . . . big eruptions and mighty changes were in store for Europe and the world in the near future. To train and prepare our country for these world events—to keep in readiness for them, as far as we could—seemed to be the immediate task. The preparation was largely an ideological one. First of all there should be no doubt about the objective of political independence . . . . then there was the social goal. It would be too much, I felt, to expect the Congress to go far in the direction just then. The Congress was a purely political and nationalistic body, unused to thinking on other lines. But a beginning might be made."<sup>1</sup>

Nehru's feeling that the inner conflict was no longer there, was mere optimism. He had still profound doubts and contradictory ideas about basic questions of a philosophical nature. But for his political action he had found two definite objectives—complete independence for India and a socialist pattern of society. So the sense of frustration was gone and he resumed his fight in the battle for freedom with renewed determination and fervour.

Since 1927, Nehru's role in Indian politics was two-fold. He used the whole force of his magnetic personality, his extraordinary efficiency and organizing capacity in making the Congress a powerful political party, as well as in turning its thoughts rapidly towards the goal of complete independence and slowly towards that of a socialistic pattern of society. In the former task he had to face the opposition of loyalists and moderates outside the Congress, and in the latter that of

<sup>1</sup> *An Autobiography*, p. 166.



extreme nationalists within the party. The hand that supported him at every step in this struggle was that of Gandhiji, in spite of the fact that in those days they differed from each other on many important questions.

Under the surface of a busy and successful life Nehru's inner conflict continued. He was getting farther and farther away from the religious attitude in life and politics, which had consciously or unconsciously exercised a considerable influence over him for some time. The reason for this change was that he now felt:

"The usual religious outlook does not concern itself with this world. It seems to me to be the enemy of clear thought, for it is based not only on the acceptance without demur of certain unalterable theories and dogmas, but also on sentiment and emotion and passion."<sup>1</sup>

But the motive underlying Nehru's opposition to formal religion was itself religious in the true sense of the word:

"The religious outlook does not help and even hinders the moral and spiritual progress of the people, if morality and spirituality are to be judged by the world's standards, and not by the hereafter. Usually religion becomes an asocial quest for God or the Absolute, and the religious man is concerned far more with his own salvation than with the good of the society."<sup>2</sup>

What caused him to doubt the existence of a benevolent providence was the vague feeling of discontent with the constitution of things known to the Germans as *welt-schmerz*, which has often led intensely loving natures to scepticism or unbelief:

"I sometimes wonder at the faith of the people in a beneficent providence; how it survives shock after shock and how disaster itself and disproof of beneficence are considered but tests of the soundness of faith."<sup>3</sup>

But in spite of all his scepticism he felt that religion fulfilled a basic need of human life, that it was something more than shutting one's eyes to unpleasant facts or trying to escape from the realities of life—something based on a profound reality:

<sup>1</sup> *An Autobiography*, p. 377.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 476.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

"And yet I knew well that there was something else in it, something which supplied a deep inner craving of human beings. How else could it have been the tremendous power it has been and brought peace and comfort to innumerable tortured souls? Was that peace merely the shelter of blind belief and absence of questioning, the calm that comes from being safe in harbour, protected from the storms of the open sea, or was it something more? In some cases it was certainly more."<sup>1</sup>

Nehru knew very well that what gave purpose and zest to life was faith in one form or another and all faith was essentially religious in nature as it went beyond the limits of rational thought and scientific knowledge :

"Faith in progress, in a cause, in ideals, in human goodness and human destiny—are they not allied to faith in a providence? If we seek to justify them by reason and logic immediately we get into difficulties. But something within us clutches to that hope and faith, for, deprived of them life would be a wilderness without an oasis."<sup>2</sup>

Some of our educated young men find the anchor of faith in the philosophy of Karl Marx. Nehru was also considerably influenced by it in those days. He did not, however, adopt it wholesale, but subjected it to a critical examination, accepting what was truly scientific and rejecting the pseudo-scientific element which was in reality purely metaphysical or speculative. On the whole, it gave him a new historical perception and a rational and critical outlook on life:

"The theory and philosophy of Marxism lightened up many a dark corner of my mind. History came to have a new meaning for me. The Marxist interpretation threw a flood of light on it, and it became an unfolding drama with some order or purpose, however unconscious, behind it."<sup>3</sup>

But in striking the balance in life, in harmonizing the body, the mind and the spirit which was the real problem facing him, he did not get any help from Marxism. His critical mind found it simply impossible to take up the communistic atti-

<sup>1</sup> *An Autobiography*, p. 374.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 477.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 362.

tude of accepting the Marxist philosophy as gospel truth and making it the basis of a new fanatical religion:

"I dislike dogmatism, and the treatment of Karl Marx's writings or any other books as revealed scripture which cannot be challenged, and the regimentation and heresy hunts which seem to be a feature of modern communism."<sup>1</sup>

While Nehru did not accept all that Marx had said or written, he was very much impressed by the successful way in which the great German thinker had introduced the scientific method in the study of history as well as of social and economic problems:

"Marx may be wrong in some of his statements, or his theory of value; this I am not competent to judge. But he seems to me to have possessed quite an extraordinary degree of insight into social phenomena, and this insight was due to the scientific method he adopted."<sup>2</sup>

He did not become a Marxist or a communist, but the study of Marxism did influence him in adopting moderate socialistic views:

"I am very far from being a communist. My roots are perhaps partly in the nineteenth century, and I have been too much influenced by the humanist liberal tradition to get out of it completely."<sup>3</sup>

Still he had realized:

"The world is in a hopeless muddle, and some way out must be found. We cannot wait, Micawber-like, for something to turn up . . . . The malady has to be diagnosed, the cure suggested and worked for . . . . . We must think in terms of the world, therefore, and in these terms a narrow autarchy is out of the question . . . . . Inevitably we are led to the only possible solution—the establishment of a scientific order, first within national boundaries, and eventually in the world as a whole, with a controlled production and distribution of wealth for the public good."<sup>4</sup>

But even in those days Nehru's conception of the economic order was not socialism in the current sense of the word, but

<sup>1</sup> *An Autobiography*, p. 591.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 522-3.

was nearer to the idea of the Welfare State, which lays greater stress on the positive than on the negative side of socialism:

"The object is not to deprive, but to provide; to change the present scarcity for future abundance. But in doing so the path must necessarily be cleared of impediments and selfish interests which want to hold society back."<sup>1</sup>

Though Nehru wanted to think over these questions in terms of the whole world, and did not believe in isolation or autarchy, he realized that in shaping her social and political life India could not follow any rigid doctrine or borrow a ready made system from any foreign country, but had to evolve a system of her own suited to her conditions and needs:

"If socialism is to be built up in India, it will have to grow out of Indian conditions, and the closest study of these conditions is essential."<sup>2</sup>

Nehru has summed up his idea of the social goal and the method to be followed in the following words:

"Our final aim can only be a classless society with equal economic justice and opportunity for all, a society organized on a planned basis for raising of mankind to higher material and cultural levels, to a cultivation of spiritual values, of cooperation, unselfishness, the spirit of service, the desire to do right, goodwill and love—ultimately a world order. Everything that comes in the way will have to be removed, gently if possible, forcibly if necessary. And there seems to be little doubt that coercion will often be necessary. But if force is used, it should not be in the spirit of hatred or cruelty, but with the dispassionate desire to remove obstruction."<sup>3</sup>

Thus we find that the informing spirit of Nehru's social ideal is very much the same as that of Gandhiji's Ramrajya, though the method which he wants to adopt for putting his ideals into practice does not come up to the high standard which Gandhiji laid down for *ahimsa*. Had Gandhiji been asked what he thought of Nehru's words quoted above, he would certainly have rejected that "coercion will often be necessary" for establishing or maintaining a just social order,

<sup>1</sup> *An Autobiography*, p. 588.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 589.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 551-2.

but he would have endorsed the general idea of such an order as visualized by Nehru. But Nehru himself had in those days, from time to time, an exaggerated feeling of fundamental differences with Gandhiji. This feeling reached its highest pitch when he read the statement issued by Gandhiji at the time of suspending the Civil Disobedience Movement in April 1934:

"A vast difference seemed to separate him from me. With a stab of pain I felt that the chords of allegiance that had bound me to him for many years had snapped."<sup>1</sup>

But in fact, neither the difference between the two became "vast", nor the "bonds of allegiance" that bound Nehru to Gandhiji had snapped. All that had happened was that Gandhiji had, according to his conception of *Satyagraha* advised the Congress to take up the Constructive Programme as a substitute for Civil Disobedience. But as Gandhiji's doctrine of *Satyagraha* and his general philosophy of life had not yet come before the country in a complete form, there was a general misunderstanding that Gandhiji was going to give up for good the political fight for freedom or at least the use of the powerful weapon of *Satyagraha* and "entangle" the country in Constructive Programme. As soon as he realized that many Congress leaders were so impatient to achieve political freedom that they had no time for understanding and trying the Constructive Programme, he cut off his formal relations with the National Congress, leaving it to carry on its purely political work and formed other organizations to do what he called the Constructive Work. The temporary tension between him and Nehru soon disappeared, and the bonds of mutual affection and allegiance remained intact.

Such misunderstandings on the part of Nehru were really due to the general discontent and restlessness from which he suffered in those days. His hope that his "inner conflict" had been resolved after his return from Europe had proved illusory. No doubt he had chalked out for himself a fairly definite political programme, but its theoretical and moral basis was

<sup>1</sup> *An Autobiography*, p. 506.

not yet quite clear. He did not accept Marxism as a philosophy of life. He denied religion but not the need for it. He believed in objective moral values but could give no reason for his belief. His mental attitude looked like scepticism, but he was not a sceptic in the accepted sense of the word. Some positive idea of his mode of thinking in those days can be formed from the fact that he was prepared to call his thought and action religious according to the following definition of a religious act by John Dewey and the religious thought by Romain Rolland :

"Any activity pursued in behalf of an ideal end against obstacles, and in spite of threats of personal loss, because of conviction of its general and enduring value, is religious in quality."<sup>1</sup>

"It is the quality of thought and not its object which determines its source and allows us to decide whether or not it emanates from religion. If it turns fearlessly towards the search for truth at all costs with single-minded sincerity prepared for any sacrifice, I should call it religious; for it presupposes faith in an end to human effort higher than the life of existing society, and even higher than the life of humanity as a whole. Scepticism itself, when it proceeds from vigorous natures true to the core, when it is an expression of strength and not of weakness, joins in the march of the Grand Army of the religious Soul."<sup>2</sup>

But apparently Nehru's scepticism, if we can use the word, was not yet an expression of strength or he would not have been subject to such moods as these:

"All these shouting crowds, and all dull and wearying public functions, and interminable arguments, and the dust and tumble of politics touched me on the surface only, though sometimes the touch was sharp and pointed. My real conflict lay within me, a conflict of ideas, desires and loyalties, of subconscious depths struggling with outer circumstances, of inner hunger unsatisfied. I became a battleground, where various forces struggled for mastery."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> John Dewey quoted by Nehru in *An Autobiography*, p. 380.

<sup>2</sup> Romain Rolland in his *Life of Ramakrishna*, quoted *Ibid.*, p. 380.

<sup>3</sup> *An Autobiography*, p. 207.

What was this "inner hunger" which remained unsatisfied? As far as one can see, it was an urge for balance, a desire for harmony. Perhaps balance and harmony can only be produced by a comprehensive view of life, whether it is religious or philosophical. But such a view has not yet been given to the modern man who has made scientific thought his sole guide in the search for truth. Only a few persons who could really emancipate themselves from dogmatism, using scientific thought in the true objective way, have succeeded in assimilating the eternal spiritual and moral values from their cultural heritage and harmonizing them with social and economic values of their own age. Philosophies of life, personal and tentative, have thus been formed and produced a certain balance in the minds and harmony in the thought and action of individuals. But Nehru failed so far in working out a synthesis of the past and present. His social traditions were of the ancient wisdom of the East and his own mind had been trained in the modern West. He had a romantic idea of and a sentimental attachment to his national heritage, but he was not yet in possession of it. Speaking of the vision of India as it had appeared to him he said:

"Though she was overburdened with ancient tradition and present misery, and her eyelids were a little weary, she had 'a beauty wrought out from within upon the flesh, the deposit little cell by cell, of strange thoughts and fantastic reveries and exquisite passions.' Behind and within her battered body one could still glimpse a majesty of soul."<sup>1</sup>

This India was out of his reach and until he had it, he could not make his own even what the West had given him. So he was oscillating between the East and the West without catching hold of the one or the other:

"I have become a queer mixture of the East and West, out of place everywhere, at home nowhere. . . . I am a stranger and alien in the West. I cannot be of it. But in my own country also, sometimes, I have an exile's feeling."<sup>2</sup>

He looked wistfully at Gandhiji in whose personality he

<sup>1</sup> *An Autobiography*, p. 429.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 597-8.

could find the poise and harmony lacking in himself:

"In his own way he had discovered the art of living and had made of his life an artistic whole. Every gesture had meaning and grace, without a false touch. There are no tough edges or sharp corners about him, no trace of vulgarity or commonness . . . Having found an inner peace, he radiated it to others and marched through life's tortuous ways with firm and undaunted steps."<sup>1</sup>

The secret of the inner harmony which Gandhiji had achieved seemed to be that he had evolved an integrated and balanced philosophy of life through a synthesis of the best values of the past and the present and was trying to create a similar harmony in the thought and life of his people:

"He revived ancient and half-forgotten memories, and gave her i.e. India glimpses of her own soul. Crushed in the dark misery of the present, she had tried to find relief in helpless muttering and in vague dreams of the past and the future, but he came and gave hope to her mind and strength to her much-battered body, and the future became an alluring vision. Two-face like Janus, she looked both backwards into the past and forward into the future, and tried to combine the two."<sup>2</sup>

Nehru had immense affection and reverence for this messenger of hope and faith. But his critical-analytical mind could not follow anybody blindly. He could accept much from Gandhiji's picture of new India, but not all. He had to get for himself a glimpse of the soul of India, a vision of her past and present and to make his own attempt at blending them into a harmonious whole.

The proper moment for that came when he was detained in Ahmadnagar fort with some of his comrades in 1942. During this last term of imprisonment he had a far better opportunity of studying and thinking in peace than in any of the previous terms. The period of detention was indefinite, and the chances were that he would be able to stay in one place for several years. Moreover, he was given facilities which he had never enjoyed before. On the one hand, he had privacy and could

<sup>1</sup> *An Autobiography*, p. 130.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 254.



concentrate on reading and writing, and on the other, he could meet and have discussions with his friends which served as a further stimulus for provoking thought. Besides, he had by now accumulated a vast stock of personal observation and experience which could serve as a solid background for his thought; and the feeling of inner loneliness, which he had after the death of his parents and wife, and the adoption of the most austere mode of living possible to a man like him had given him a certain detachment of mind so that he could look at things more objectively.

The first result of reviewing his thoughts in this calm and quiet atmosphere was that Nehru found out the reasons why he had not been able to achieve harmony either in his personal life or in his philosophy of life. He realized that what he called his "inner hunger" had remained unsatisfied, because he had not yet assimilated from his own heritage of the past the healthy and enduring element which could serve as the focal point of his independent view of life. The India which he wanted to change was not yet known to him. He had believed that the old drooping, gigantic tree could not thrive again unless a sapling from the modern West was grafted upon it. But he had only a distant glimpse of the ancient tree. Now he felt the imperative need of looking at it closely in order to see which was the main trunk with a thousand living roots embedded in the soil and which were the withered branches which had to be cut off:

✓ "India was in my blood and there was much in her that instinctively thrilled me. And yet I approached her almost as an alien critic, full of dislike for the present as well as for many of the relics of the past that I saw. To some extent I came to her via the West and looked at her as a friendly Westerner might have done. I was eager and anxious to change her outlook and appearance and give her the garb of modernity. And yet doubts rose within me. Did I know India, I who presumed to scrap much of her past heritage? There was a great deal that had to be scrapped, that must be scrapped; but surely India could not have been what she undoubtedly was, and could not have continued a cultured existence for

thousands of years, if she had not possessed something very vital and enduring, something that was worthwhile. What was this something?"<sup>1</sup>

To answer this question Nehru began, during his sojourn in the Ahmadnagar fort, a deep and systematic study of the cultural history of India, and in order to make his thoughts clearer started writing a book *The Discovery of India* in April, 1944.

In a way Nehru's pilgrimage for the discovery of India had already been going on for years. He had begun reading the history and literature of ancient India at an early age and had seen in the course of his travels hundreds of natural beauty spots and archaeological relics—the living monuments of India's history, literature and mythology:

"I read her history and read also a part of her abundant ancient literature . . . . . I wandered over the Himalayas which are closely connected with old myth and legend and which have so much influenced our thoughts and literature . . . . The mighty rivers of India that flow from this great mountain barrier into the plains of India attracted me and reminded me of innumerable phases of our history . . . . . I visited old monuments and ruins and ancient sculptures and frescoes—Ajanta, Ellora, and Elephanta Caves and other places, and I also saw the lovely buildings of a later age in Agra and Delhi where every stone told me the story of India's past . . . . . These journeys and visits of mine, with the background of my reading, gave me an insight into the past. To a somewhat bare intellectual understanding was added an emotional appreciation, and gradually a sense of reality began to creep into my mental picture of India."<sup>2</sup>

But Nehru wanted to see that past reflected in the mirror of the present, to search for the soul of India in the breasts of her living inhabitants; and he had ample opportunity to do so as he toured the country from one end to the other in connection with his political activities :

"During the twenties my work was largely confined to my own

<sup>1</sup> *Discovery of India*, p. 42.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 43-4.

province and I travelled extensively and intensively through the towns and villages of the forty-eight districts of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh . . . . During the thirties, in the intervals of my life out of prison and especially during the election campaign of 1936-37, I travelled more extensively throughout India . . . . I toured in every province and went deep into villages. I spoke of political and economic issues and judging from my speech I was full of politics and elections. But all this while, in a corner of my mind, lay something deeper and more vivid, and elections meant little to it, or the other excitements of the passing day. Another and a major excitement had seized me, and I was again on a great voyage of discovery and the land of India and the people of India lay spread out before me."<sup>1</sup>

In these travels Nehru saw not only the face of India but had occasional peeps into the depths of her soul, and this whetted his ardent desire to have a fuller and better view of this soul.

"It was not her wide spaces that eluded me, or even her diversity, but some depth of soul which I could not fathom, though I had occasional and tantalizing glimpses of it . . . . It was this spirit of India that I was after, not through idle curiosity, though I was curious enough, but because I felt that it might give me some key to the understanding of my country and people, some guidance to thought and action."<sup>2</sup>

Many years of study of India's past and present—of books, men and the physical environment in which they live—had given Nehru a wealth of impressions some of which he had put into that part of his *Glimpses of World History* which deals with India. But now in the fort of Ahmadnagar he had a much better opportunity of marshalling these impressions so as to search in the changing expressions on the face of India, its real and permanent features, in the vast variety of its cultural phenomena a single abiding soul. This quest led him to one thing at least. From the cultural heritage of India he assimilated as much as could serve as the focal point of his view of life and as an anchor for his secular faith.

<sup>1</sup> *Discovery of India*, p. 52.      <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

In his *Discovery of India* we find that his restless mind had acquired a measure of tranquillity, his volatile personality a certain amount of poise. Comparing the present state of his mind with that twelve years earlier when he wrote the *Glimpses*, he says:

"I suppose I have changed a good deal in these twelve years. I have grown more contemplative. There is perhaps a little more poise and equilibrium, some sense of detachment, a greater calmness of spirit."<sup>1</sup>

This condition is quite new to him and he finds it puzzling and a little embarrassing:

"Is this, I have wondered, the growth of a spirit of resignation or is it a toughening of the texture? Is it just age and a lessening of vitality and of the passion of life? Or is it due to long periods in prison and life slowly ebbing away?"<sup>2</sup>

Looking at Nehru's subsequent life, it is difficult to believe that there was any lessening of vitality or sensitiveness. The real reason why there was now a comparative calm in his temperament and a poise in his personality must be that his inner conflict was practically resolved and he had achieved a basic unity and harmony in his ideas.

Like all sensitive minds, Nehru had, before he could come to something positive and permanent in the evolution of his view of life, passed through a major crisis in addition to the minor ones we have mentioned above. Six or seven years before he wrote his *Discovery of India*, an American Publisher had asked him to write an essay on his philosophy of life and he had refused. The reason was that just at that time the world was undergoing catastrophic changes which had shaken Nehru and filled him with distress and desolation. It seemed as if his basic ideas were all in a state of flux:

"What was my philosophy of life? I didn't know. Some years earlier I would not have been so hesitant. There was a definiteness about my thinking and objectives then which has faded away since . . . . Yet I functioned, for the urge to action was there and a real or imagined coordination of that

<sup>1</sup> *Discovery of India*, p. 11.      <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

action with the ideals I held. But a growing taste of politics, as I saw them, seized me and gradually my whole attitude to life seemed to undergo a transformation. The ideals and objectives of yesterday were still the ideals of today but they had lost some of their lustre."<sup>1</sup>

Probably the worst shock Nehru ever had, came when he saw that the world which had so far steadily advanced along the lines of a socialistic way of living and scientific way of thinking had suddenly taken a complete turn in the reverse direction. So much so that in some countries socialism had been deformed into fascism, while aggressive nationalism or imperialism and national policies were being guided by the lowest animal passions instead of scientific insight:

"Evil triumphed often enough, but what was far worse was the coarsening and distortion of what had seemed so right. Was human nature so essentially bad that it would take ages of training, through suffering and misfortune, before it could behave reasonably and raise man above the creature of lust and violence and deceit that he now was? And meanwhile was every effort to change it radically in the present or near future doomed to failure?"<sup>2</sup>

At the time of writing the *Discovery of India*, the crisis had passed. The discovery of the Soul of India had renewed Nehru's faith in man and restored the equilibrium in his ideas. If the goal to which his thought and action was dedicated had not become quite clear to him, he had at least seen the way leading to it clearly enough. The general outline of his view of life had not changed, but the order of values within it and the measure of their importance had changed, and doubt had begun to give way to belief.

## (2)

At this stage Nehru's fundamental ideas had attained clarity and balance enough to lend themselves to something like a systemic survey.

<sup>1</sup> *Discovery of India*, pp. 12-3.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

He still looked at the world of nature and the life of man from the scientific point of view, but no more through the coloured spectacles of dogmatic "assurance through which science of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries"<sup>1</sup> used to look at things. He knew that science was now conscious of its limitations, confined itself to the study and interpretation of the physical and biological worlds, and refrained from encroaching upon the world of emotion and intuition, of things spiritual and moral. It had realized that its analytical and quantitative methods could not help in understanding and explaining the invisible and imponderable, and that was the reason why it failed to find out the real nature and the ultimate end of human life. Even in its own domain, what it had achieved so far was the knowledge of relations between things and the harnessing of some powers of nature in the service of man, but not the knowledge of the essence of reality of things:

"Probably also the normal methods of science, its dealings with the visible worlds and the processes of life, were not wholly adapted to the psychical, the artistic, the spiritual, and other elements of the invisible world. Life does not consist entirely of what we see and hear and feel, the visible world which is undergoing change in time and space. It is continually touching an invisible world of other, and possibly more stable elements."<sup>2</sup>

"The ultimate purpose of man may be said to be to gain knowledge, to realize truth, to appreciate goodness and beauty. The scientific method of objective inquiry is not applicable to all these and much that is vital in life seems to be beyond its scope—the sensitiveness to art and poetry, the emotion that beauty produces, the inner recognition of goodness."<sup>3</sup>

Science ignored the ultimate purposes and looked at the fact alone. . . . (It) added to the power of man to such an extent that for the first time it was possible to conceive that man could triumph over and shape his physical environ-

<sup>1</sup> *An Autobiography*, p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> *Discovery of India*, p. 14.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 624.

ment . . . yet when this sorry scheme of things seemed to be entirely within his grasp, to mould it nearer to the heart's desire, there was some essential lack and some vital element was missing . . . There was no knowledge of ultimate purpose and not even an understanding of the immediate purpose . . . Nor did man, so powerful in his control of nature, have the power to control himself, and the monster he had created ran amuck".<sup>1</sup>

But Nehru was convinced that, when science had made further progress, it would be able to unravel many mysteries which baffle it to-day. Still it would not be able to go beyond a certain point:

"There is no visible limit to the advance of science, if it is given the chance to advance. Yet it may be that the scientific method of observation is not always applicable to all the varieties of human experience and cannot cross the uncharted ocean that surrounds us. With the help of philosophy it may go a little further and venture even on these high seas. And when both science and philosophy fail us, we shall have to rely on such other powers of apprehension that we may possess. For there appears to be a definite stopping place beyond which reason, as the mind is at present constituted, cannot go."<sup>2</sup>

But that stopping-place is still very far off and it is only science and reason that can take us there. So we should never leave hold of them :

"Realizing the limitations of reason and scientific method we have still to hold on to them with all our strength, for without that firm basis and background we can have no grip of any kind of truth or reality."<sup>3</sup>

Even at the stage where science is at the end of its tether and we have to rely on "other powers of apprehension", we need that even temper and balanced judgement which are characteristic of a true scientist :

"Even when we go to the regions beyond the reach of the scientific method and visit the mountain tops where philosophy

<sup>1</sup> *Discovery of India*, pp. 622-3.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 623.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

dwells and high emotions fill us, or gaze at the immensity beyond, that approach and temper are still necessary.”<sup>1</sup>

So Nehru has now passed through the stages of denial and doubt and reached the border of belief. He has fully realized that above all his material wants there is still a basic need “the metaphysical need” as some philosophers have called it. Since the dawn of creation, man, whenever he turns his eye inward, has a strange feeling of utter loneliness and an abysmal ignorance in this vast limitless universe and is oppressed by a nameless fear which never leaves him. There is an inner urge to be free from this tyranny of fear and have true peace of mind by an intimate accord with one’s surroundings, by a realization of the abiding reality behind the transient appearance of things :

“The travail of the soul is a tragic and lonely business. External events and their consequences affect us, powerfully, and yet the greatest shocks come to our minds through inner fears and conflicts. While we advance on the external plane, as we must if we are to survive, we have also to win peace with ourselves and between ourselves and our environment, a peace which brings satisfaction not only to our physical and material needs but also to those inner imaginative urges and adventurous spirit that have distinguished man ever since he started on his troubled journey in the realms of thought and action.”<sup>2</sup>

To be at peace with ourselves and our surroundings and to get a complete view of life which satisfies “the inner imaginative urges”, new Humanism (which Nehru calls Scientific Humanism) requires us to cultivate not only a scientific approach and philosophical vision, but also a feeling of reverence for the highest truths which are beyond the reach of science and philosophy :

“It is therefore with the temper and approach of science allied to philosophy, and with reverence for all that lies beyond that we must face life. Thus we may develop an integrated vision of life which embraces in its wide scope the past and the

<sup>1</sup> *Discovery of India*, p. 624.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 626.



present, with all their heights and depths and look with serenity towards the future."<sup>1</sup>

This "integral vision of life" which is an outcome of tempering the realism of science with the idealism of philosophy and the reverence of religious sentiment, Nehru has tried to make his own. It has brought him intellectually very close to the religious conception of the rationalist Hindus who think of absolute reality not in terms of a personal God but in those of an all-pervading power :

"And yet some faith seems necessary in things of the spirit which are beyond the scope of our physical world, some reliance on moral, spiritual and idealistic conceptions, or else we have no anchorage, no objectives or purpose in life. Whether we believe in God or not, it is impossible not to believe in something, whether we call it creative life-giving force, or vital energy inherent in matter which gives it its capacity for self-movement and change and growth, or by some other name, something that is as real, though elusive, as life is real when contrasted with death."<sup>2</sup>

"What the mysterious is I do not know. I do not call it God because God has come to mean much that I do not believe in. I find myself incapable of thinking of a deity or of an unknown supreme power in anthropomorphic terms, and the fact that many people think so is a source of surprise to me. Any idea of personal God seems very odd to me. Intellectually, I can appreciate to some extent the conception of monism, and I have been attracted towards the *Advaita* (non-dualist) philosophy of the *Vedanta*."<sup>3</sup>

The *Advaita* doctrine has become all the more fascinating for Nehru since the conception of reality which science has formed as a result of its latest inquiry is, according to him, very much similar to it :

"All this upheaval of thought, due to the advance of science, has led scientists into a new region, verging on the metaphysical . . . . The latest developments in physics have gone a long way to demonstrate the fundamental unity of nature. . . .

<sup>1</sup> *Discovery of India*, p. 626.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 625.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 16-7.

it is interesting to compare some of the latest conclusions of science with the fundamental ideas underlying the *Advaita Vedantic* theory. These ideas were that the universe is made of one substance whose form is perpetually changing, and further that the sum-total of energies remains always the same."<sup>1</sup>

Similarly, other fundamental beliefs of Hinduism are, to some extent, acceptable to him:

"The environment in which I have grown up takes the soul (or rather the *atma*) and a future life, the *Karma* theory of cause and effect, and re-incarnation for granted. I have been affected by it and so, in a sense, I am favourably disposed towards these assumptions. There might be a soul which survives the physical death of the body, and a theory of cause and effect governing life's action seems reasonable though . . . Presuming a soul, there seems to be some logic also in the theory of re-incarnation."<sup>2</sup>

~ But his being "favourably disposed" towards these ideas does not amount to a firm faith in them. He thinks they have no influence over his life and action:

"I do not believe in any of these or other theories and assumptions as a matter of religious faith. They are just intellectual speculations in an unknown region about which we know next to nothing. They do not affect my life, and whether they were proved right or wrong subsequently, they would make little difference to me."<sup>3</sup>

~ Nehru's cautious attitude, which makes him regard his fundamental conceptions as no more than intellectual assumptions, is governed by three motives. One of them is purely religious and characteristically Indian. The second is moral and is rooted in the moral consciousness of the Indian mind. The third is scientific and shows the influence of the modern Western mind over him.

The religious motive operating here is the fundamental belief of the Indian mind that, while Truth is eternal, no idea or theory of Truth conceived by man can be eternal or perfect.

<sup>1</sup> *Discovery of India*, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*



ties of increasing human knowledge, even though this may be partly or largely subjective, and of applying this to the advancement and betterment of human living and social organization.”<sup>1</sup>

This tendency “not to think too much of those fundamental questions” has, as we said, a moral motive. Nehru is afraid of dabbling in these questions. This attitude reflects the spirit of “secular piety” which had prevented Gautama Buddha from speculating on theological or metaphysical problems. Like the great Buddha, he has a rooted fear that the quest of ultimate reality will lead to escapism :

“There has been in the past, and there is to a lesser extent even today among some people, an absorption in finding an answer to the riddle of the universe. This leads them away from the individual and social problems of the day, and when they are unable to solve that riddle they despair and turn to inaction and triviality, or find comfort in some dogmatic creed.”<sup>2</sup>

Then the scientific approach, which Nehru had adopted under the influence of Western education, furnishes an additional motive for refraining from probing into the fundamental secrets of the universe. Although he does not regard the scientific approach as adequate for the search of absolute truth, and admits that at a certain stage the philosophical approach will be necessary, and beyond that “other powers of apprehension” will have to be used, still, he is quite certain that initially the greater part of the way to the goal of ultimate reality must be traversed under the guidance of science. But science is at present so preoccupied in acquiring a thorough knowledge of the world of phenomena that it cannot help us in our quest of reality, and without its help the quest is useless. Only when science has completed its immediate task and is able to venture into the unknown, will there be a possibility of solving the riddle of reality :

“Often, as I look at this world, I have a sense of mysteries, of unknown depths. The urge to understand it, in so far as I

<sup>1</sup> *Discovery of India*, p. 18.      <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 18-9.

can, often comes to me; to be in tune with it and to experience it in its fullness. But the way to that understanding seems to me essentially the way of science, the way of objective approach<sup>1</sup> . . . . . it forges ahead in a hundred directions, in its own precise experimental way of observation, widening the bounds of the charted regions of knowledge, and changing human life in the process . . . . Ignoring for the moment the *why* of philosophy, it will go on asking *how*, and as it finds this out it gives greater content and meaning to life, and perhaps takes us some way to answering the *why*.”<sup>2</sup>

Thus Nehru's speculative-intuitive thought leads him to the monistic conception of Vedantic Hinduism, but his analytical-critical thought allows him to accept it only as an assumption and not as an article of faith. If he had a religious mind and could look oftener into himself, he would perhaps have felt that the difference which is found between assumption and faith on the intellectual level disappears as soon as one goes down to the deeper levels of consciousness. But he has a different bent of mind and is interested in quite different problems :

✓“The real problems for me remain problems of individual and social life, of harmonious living, of a proper balancing of an individual's inner and outer life, of an adjustment of the relations between individuals and between groups, of a continuous becoming something better and higher, of social development, of the ceaseless adventure of man. In the solution of these problems the way of observation and precise knowledge and deliberate reasoning, according to the methods of science, must be followed.”<sup>3</sup>

Among the schools of thought which have tried to apply the method of science to the study of social problems, Marxism has influenced Nehru most. But from the very outset he was dissatisfied with its metaphysical and moral aspects. Now that he had come under the spell of the philosophical teaching of Vedanta and the moral example of Gandhi this dissatisfaction increased :

<sup>1</sup> *Discovery of India*, p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

"A study of Marx and Lenin produced a powerful effect on my mind and helped me to see history and current affairs in a new light<sup>1</sup> . . . . . Much in Marxist philosophical outlook I could accept without difficulty . . . . . It did not satisfy me completely, nor did it answer all the questions in my mind, and, almost unawares, a vague idealist approach would creep into my mind, something rather akin to the *Vedanta* approach . . . . . Also there was the background of ethics. I realized that the moral approach is a changing one and depends on the growing mind and an advancing civilization; it is conditioned by the mental climate of the age. Yet there was something more to it than that, certain basic urges which had greater permanence. I did not like the frequent divorce in communist, as in other practice between action and these basic urges or principles."<sup>2</sup>

—The last sentences show that as far as the moral outlook and attitude is concerned, Nehru's difference with Marxism is fundamental. But they also point to a far more significant conclusion that Nehru had firm and definite views about moral principles and values which are more than mere assumptions and could rightly be called convictions. It is an interesting and noteworthy point that the critical-analytical way of thinking which is the gift of Western education to Nehru, cuts, like a knife, through all metaphysical and theological ideas, but is blunted against moral conceptions. The reason is that these conceptions are not the slender threads of logical thought but the strong iron chains of intuitive thought made up of links forged by several thousand years old moral traditions of India and lifelong association with Gandhiji. That is why Nehru accepts without the least hesitation, as he would accept an axiomatic truth, the basic principle of Gandhian moral philosophy, that means and ends are of equal importance as they are essentially the same :

"Some kind of ethical approach to life has a strong appeal for me, though it would be difficult for me to justify it logically. I have been attracted by Gandhiji's stress on right means and

<sup>1</sup> *Discovery of India*, p. 17.      <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

I think one of his great contributions to our public life has been this emphasis . . . . *perhaps ends and means are not really separable and form together one organic whole.*"<sup>1</sup>

✓ If Nehru had the time to ponder the words italicised by us which have come from the depths of his heart, and all their implications, he would get an outline of a moral and religious philosophy which he would be surprised to find, was very close to that of Gandhiji. But he did not have the time. During the best part of his life he had not only to fight for national freedom but simultaneously to draw up a plan for the national state of India which he was later called upon to put into practice. So he could not concentrate upon evolving a complete philosophy of life. But on the strength of a few vague philosophical assumptions and some definite, certain, solid principles of moral action, he marched on towards his goal testing each step in the light of truth which guides all honest, sincere, planned and reasoned experiment.

<sup>1</sup> *Discovery of India*, p. 17.

## CHAPTER VI

### WELFARE STATE

#### *Nehru's Political and Economic Ideal*

AS WE HAVE seen, Nehru is more deeply influenced by the realistic and practical trend of the Indian mind than by its speculative, metaphysical trend. His heart is not free from a yearning after the realization of the Ultimate Truth but his mind, which rules over the heart, thinks that, for a long time to come, man will have to traverse the known world in the light of exact sciences before he comes to the stage when he can venture beyond it into the realm of the unknown. To-day science cannot unravel the mystery of absolute reality but it can, according to Nehru, discover many relative realities which make our life broader, fuller and more significant. If he had been born in a free and prosperous country he would, perhaps, have dedicated himself to the pursuit of science. But he happened to belong to a land and a continent which was economically backward and politically dependent. So his profound moral and social consciousness urged him to enter the field of politics and administration where he had to devote all his attention and energy, first, to the liberation of his country and, then, to the greater cause of broadening and elevating, with the help of science, the cramped and depressed life of the people of India and other Asian countries. So, the task of raising his countrymen and other fellow-beings socially and politically, which was for Gandhiji a means to the higher aim of the realization of Truth, became for Nehru an end in itself.

Now we have to see how Nehru wanted to realize this object, and to examine his ideal of society and state and the fundamental conceptions on which it is based. Like Gandhiji, Nehru is pre-eminently a man of action and not a theorist. So he has not given us any detailed plan of the Indian society of his conception, but has contented himself with a vague



outline. As his ideal is not materially different from that which social democracy in the West is trying to realize, what little he has said on the subject is enough to help us in forming a more or less vivid picture. Similarly, most of his basic social and political ideas are derived from the familiar democratic and socialistic philosophies of the modern West. And so, in spite of the fact that he has not expressed them in an elaborate or systematic way, we have no great difficulty in understanding them.

✓ Nehru's political creed is a representative government of the parliamentary type. But he thinks the idea of liberal democracy, which underlies it, is an incomplete idea of political freedom. Unless political democracy is supplemented by social and economic democracy that is to say, unless social and economic rights of the individual are safeguarded, as well as his political rights, there is no real freedom or progress:

"Political freedom, independence, were no doubt essential, but they were steps only in the right direction; without social freedom and a socialistic structure of society and the State, neither the country nor the individual could develop much."<sup>1</sup>

The greatest weakness of liberal democracy, according to Nehru, is that it has a historical association with the economic system of capitalism. But far from there being any organic relation between them, they are essentially contradictory. Liberal democracy cannot preserve individual freedom until it dissociates itself from the capitalistic system:

"Democracy and Capitalism grew up together in the nineteenth century, but they were not mutually compatible. There was a basic contradiction between them, for democracy laid stress on the power of the many, while capitalism gave real power to the few. This ill-assorted pair carried on somehow because political parliamentary democracy was in itself a very limited kind of democracy and did not interfere much with the growth of monopoly and power concentration. Even so, as the spirit of democracy grew, a divorce became inevitable, and the time for that has come now."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *An Autobiography*, p. 166.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 529.

The state of Nehru's conception will differ from the present liberal democratic states not only in its economic pattern (which will be socialistic not capitalistic) but also in its political structure. That is to say, it will be based on local self-government at the village level and indirect representation at the higher levels of administration which would, according to him, be in keeping with Indian traditions:

"The village can no longer be self-contained economic unit (though it may often be intimately connected with a collective or co-operative farm), but it can very well be governmental and electoral unit, each such unit functioning as a self-governing community within the larger political frame work, and looking after the essential needs of the village. If it is treated to some extent as an electoral unit, it will simplify provincial and all-India elections considerably by reducing the number of direct electors. The village council, itself chosen by all the adult men and women of the village, could form these electors for the bigger elections. Indirect elections may have some disadvantages but, having regard to the background in India, I feel sure that the village should be treated as a unit. This will give a truer and more responsible representation."<sup>1</sup>

The idea, which Nehru has here only lightly touched, is very significant and implies that, at least in the field of political administration, he thinks of decentralization more or less in the same way as Gandhiji. Unfortunately he has neither pursued the idea any further in his writings nor shown any inclination towards putting it into practice. Yet it is possible that when he is to some extent free from the responsibilities with which he is burdened, he will turn his attention towards making the village a self-governing unit. Along with this decentralized political organization, Nehru wants a social organization based on equality. The idea of equality has the same fundamental position in his system of thought as the idea of liberty in Gandhian philosophy:

"The spirit of the age is in favour of equality though practice denies it almost everywhere.<sup>2</sup> . . . . Yet the spirit of the

<sup>1</sup> *Discovery of India*, p. 637.      <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 634.

age will triumph. In India, at any rate, we must aim at equality. That does not and cannot mean that everybody is physically or intellectually or spiritually equal or can be made so. But it does mean equal opportunities for all and no political, economic or social barrier in the way of any individual or group."<sup>1</sup>

Naturally he is a strong opponent of caste as it exists to-day. But a functional organization of society under which every man following a certain vocation regards his professional work as his ordained duty or *dharma* is, according to him, best suited to India, though he would like a re-arrangement of functions and vocations according to the needs of the modern age:

"It (caste) was an aristocratic approach based on traditionalism. This outlook has to change completely for it is wholly opposed to modern conditions and the democratic ideal. The functional organization of social groups in India may continue, but even that will undergo a vast change as the nature of modern industry creates new functions and puts an end to many old ones. The tendency today everywhere is towards a functional organization of society, and the concept of abstract rights is giving place to that of functions. This is in harmony with the old Indian ideal."<sup>2</sup>

Thus the search for political equality leads Nehru to social equality. He feels that equal political rights for all have no significance or value until social distinctions are done away with and all enjoy the same status. Similarly, he realizes that there can be no genuine social equality unless the present capitalist system is replaced by a just social order in which everybody has an opportunity to work according to his capacity and gets proper recompense for his work:

"If the spirit of the age demands equality, it must necessarily also demand an economic system which fits in with it and encourages it . . . . The problems of India, complicated as they seem, are essentially due to an attempt to advance while preserving the political and economic structure more or less intact. Political advance is made subject to the preservation

<sup>1</sup> *Discovery of India*, p. 635.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 634.

of this structure and existing vested interests. The two are incompatible. Political change there must be, but economic change is equally necessary. That change will have to be in the direction of a democratically planned collectivism."<sup>1</sup>

But the collectivism Nehru is thinking of, is not pure socialism. It is a mixed economy in which land will be under cooperative or collective control, basic and other important large-scale industries will be owned by the State and small and rural industries will be run on cooperative lines:

"A democratic collectivism need not mean an abolition of private property, but it will mean the public ownership of basic and major industries. It will mean the cooperative or collective control of land. In India specially it will be necessary to have, in addition to big industries, cooperatively controlled small and village industries. Such a system of democratic collectivism will need careful and continuous planning and adaptation to the changing needs of the people."<sup>2</sup>

So he has no cut and dried economic philosophy. He does not believe in any "ism", in any particular social ideology. He has certain objectives of social welfare before him and is prepared to adopt any method of achieving them which is suggested by science, common sense or experience. These objectives are increased production, employment for all and an equitable distribution of wealth :

"The aim should be the expansion of the productive capacity of the nation in every possible way at the same time absorbing all the labour power of the nation in some activity or other and preventing unemployment. As far as possible there should be freedom to choose one's occupation. An equalization of income will not result from all this, but there will be far more equitable sharing and a progressive tendency towards equalization. In any event, the vast differences that exist today will disappear completely, and class distinctions, which are essentially based on differences in income, will begin to fade out."<sup>3</sup>

Nehru's ideal State may or may not be socialistic, but it will be a Welfare State, a moral State :

<sup>1</sup> *Discovery of India*, p. 635.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 636.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

✓“Our final aim can only be a classless society with equal economic justice and opportunity for all, a society organized on a planned basis for the raising of mankind to higher material and cultured levels, to a cultivation of spiritual values, and of cooperation, unselfishness, the spirit of service, the desire to do right, goodwill and love—ultimately a world order. Everything that comes in the way will have to be removed, gently if possible, forcibly if necessary.”<sup>1</sup>

When Nehru talks of raising the material level he should not be misunderstood. He does not attach to material values the undue importance which is generally given to them in the Western countries. “Standard of life” in his philosophy is not determined merely by physical well-being, wealth and property but by a combination of material, cultural and spiritual values. ✓Material wealth or pleasure alone has for him no significance. He regards it, rather, as a danger beyond a certain point. So he quotes with approval the following words of Einstein :

“The fate of the human race was more than ever dependant on its moral strength today. The way to a joyful and happy state is through renunciation and self-limitation everywhere.”<sup>2</sup>

“I am absolutely convinced that no wealth in the world can help humanity forward, even in the hands of the most devoted workers in the cause. The example of great and pure characters is the only thing that can produce fine ideas or noble deeds. Money only appeals to selfishness and always tempts its owners irresistibly to abuse it.”<sup>3</sup>

But Einstein had addressed these words to a society which had given too high a place to wealth in its scale of values. Nehru, on the other hand, was speaking to people who professed to despise material values to such an extent that they saw millions suffering from revolting and degrading poverty without feeling any need, or at least an urgent need, to deliver them from it. No wonder, then, that he gave in his plan for the reconstruction of India, the first priority to raising the standard of living of the people to some extent. Strictly speaking this plan was drawn up by the National Planning Committee of the

<sup>1</sup> *An Autobiography.*

<sup>2</sup> *Discovery of India*, p. 682.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

Congress in 1938. But Nehru, as its president, was mainly responsible for the ideas embodied in the plan. He was, at that time, free from the obligations of office and had no need to compromise with different interests and points of view. So the report of the National Planning Committee may be said to represent his views better than the present Five Year Plans of the Government of India. Referring to 1938 plan, he says:

“Obviously we could not consider any problem, much less plan, without some definite aim or social objective.”<sup>1</sup>

The main targets for the following two years were:

“(1) The improvement of nutrition—a balanced diet having a calorific value of 2,400 to 2,800 for an adult worker.

“(2) Improvement in clothing from the then consumption of about 15 yards to at least 30 yards per capita per annum.

“(3) Housing standards to reach at least 100 sq.ft. per capita.”<sup>2</sup>

If we compare this with the living standard of the common people envisaged by Gandhiji we find that there was a fundamental agreement between the two about the minimum standard which should be guaranteed for all.

His main difference with Gandhiji was about the method of production. Still he accepted the principle that the best method is that which provides work and livelihood for the greatest number of people. That is why he was an ardent supporter of Gandhiji's scheme for *Charkha* (the spinning-wheel) and the rural industries as an immediate practical programme:

“He (Gandhiji) was no dreamer . . . . He had unrivalled knowledge of the Indian villages and the conditions of life that prevailed there. It was out of that personal experience that he evolved his programme of the spinning-wheel and village industry. If immediate relief was to be given to the vast number of the unemployed and partially employed, if the rot that was spreading throughout India and paralyzing the masses was to be stopped, if the villagers' standards were to be raised, however little, *en masse*, if they were to be taught self-reliance instead of waiting helplessly like derelicts for

<sup>1</sup> *Discovery of India*, p. 576.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 477.

relief from others, if all this was to be done without much capital, then there seemed no other way . . . . Foolish comparisons are made between man-power and machine-power; of course a big machine can do the work of a thousand or ten thousand persons. But if these ten thousand sit idly by or starve, the introduction of that machine is not a social gain, *except in long perspective which envisages a change in social conditions.*"<sup>1</sup>

But the last words, which we have underlined, imply that Nehru expected the changed social conditions when machines could and should be usefully employed, to come after *Independence with the transfer of political power* and the control of the economic resources of the country into the hands of the National Government. He did not think the use of machine necessarily excluded full employment of man-power :

"It is a net gain both from the individual and the national point of view to utilize man-power for production. There is no necessary conflict between this and the introduction of machinery on the largest scale, provided that machinery is used primarily for absorbing labour and not for creating fresh unemployment."<sup>2</sup>

The introduction of large-scale industry, he considered, to be inevitable for solving India's economic problems. He is fully aware of its drawbacks and dangers but he is quite convinced that if industrialization is planned with due regard to the conditions and needs of the country, we can enjoy its benefits and avoid the harmful effects :

"I am all for tractors and big machinery and I am convinced that the rapid industrialization of India is essential to relieve the pressure on land, to combat poverty and raise standards of living, for defence, and a variety of other purposes. But I am equally convinced that the most careful planning and adjustment are necessary if we are to reap the full benefit of industrialization and avoid many of its dangers. The planning is necessary today in all countries of arrested growth, like China and India, which have strong traditions of their own."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Discovery of India*, pp. 486-7.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 487.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 488.

There are three great dangers in the large-scale industrialization of India. Firstly, when each machine does the work of many thousand persons, large number of men will be thrown out of work. Secondly, big factories will attract rural populations to the city. Villages will languish. Cities will grow out of all proportion. Simple and natural life will give place to a complex and artificial one. Thirdly, big capitalists, specially the leaders of defence industry and banking, will become as powerful as in other countries, and will, in their mad love of profit and power, gamble with the life and happiness of millions of men, with the peace and prosperity of the whole world. Nehru thinks that honest and wise planning can protect them from all these dangers.

The first special feature of this planning, according to him, should be to promote small-scale and cottage industries along with the large-scale industry, so that employment can be provided for the maximum number of people. Small industries if run by electric power on cooperative lines can easily compete with big industry :

"In China I was greatly attracted to the Industrial Cooperatives—the INDUSCO movement—and it seems to me that some such movement is peculiarly suited to India . . . . . It could be made to complement big industry. It must be remembered that however rapid might be the development of heavy industry in India, a vast field will remain open to small and cottage industries . . . . The increasing use of electric power facilitates the growth of small industry and makes it economically capable of competing with large-scale industry."<sup>1</sup>

The second characteristic should be that industries, whether big or small, are not concentrated in cities but disperse over the rural area, so that villages are not pushed out of existence by cities and by far the great part of the country's population lives close to the invigorating nature and the soil :

"There is also a growing opinion in favour of decentralization and even Henry Ford has advocated it. Scientists are pointing out to the psychological and biological dangers of

<sup>1</sup> *Discovery of India*, p. 488.



loss of contact with the soil which results from life in great industrial cities. Some have even said that human survival necessitates a going back to the soil and the village. Fortunately science has made it possible today for population to be spread out and remain near the soil and yet enjoy all the amenities of modern civilization and culture."<sup>1</sup>

This decentralization of industry, living in the villages, keeping close to nature, Nehru regards as absolutely necessary to save India from the artificial, decadent life which is spreading through the social organism of the West like a subtle sweet poison :

"It would seem that the kind of modern civilization that developed first in the West and then spread elsewhere, and especially the metropolitan life that has been its chief feature, produced an unstable society which gradually loses its vitality. Life advances in many fields and yet it loses its grip; it becomes more artificial and slowly ebbs away."<sup>2</sup>

He asks himself the reasons for that inner decay. The answer seems to be :

"The earth and the sun are the sources of life and if we keep away from them for long life begins to ebb away. Modern industrialized communities have lost touch with the soil and do not experience that joy which nature gives and the rich glow of health which comes from contact with mother earth. They talk of nature's beauty . . . . but they cannot commune with nature or feel part of it<sup>3</sup> . . . . It is a weakness of modern civilization that it is progressively going away from the life-giving elements. The competitive and acquisitive characteristics of modern capitalist society, the enthronement of wealth above everything else, and the continuous strain and lack of security for many, add to the ill-health of the mind and produce neurotic states. A saner and more balanced economic structure would lead to an improvement of these conditions. Even so it would be necessary to have greater and more living contacts with land and nature."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Discovery of India*, p. 488.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 676.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 677.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 678.

One way of having contact with nature could be for those who live in cities to move to the villages and live the more or less primitive life which is the lot of the Indian villages to-day. That is not what Nehru wants. His social ideal is that, while city-dwellers should have intimate relation with the villages, the material and cultural level of the rural population should be raised, so that they have the same amenities and opportunities as the city people :

“This does not mean a return to the land in the old and limited sense of the word, or to a going back to primitive ways of life. That remedy might well be worse than the disease. It should be possible to organize modern industry in such a way as to keep men and women, as far as possible, in touch with the land, and to raise the cultural level of the rural areas. The village and the city should approach each other in regard to life’s amenities, so that in both there should be full opportunities for bodily and mental development and a full all-rounded life.”<sup>1</sup>

Raising the cultural level of the rural areas involves the improvement of rural industries. Nehru lays no less stress on the promotion of small and cottage industries than on decentralization. We have already quoted the enthusiastic words in which he spoke of Gandhiji’s *Charkha* and village industries movement. But the difference between their attitudes can be judged from the view expressed by Nehru that the movement for the revival of village industries should have used small machines to supplement *Charkha* and other simple implements and these industries should have been conducted on cooperative lines :

“There are many arguments in favour of developing cottage industries at any time, but situated as we were, that was certainly the most practical thing we could do. The methods adopted may not have been the best or the most suitable. The problem was vast, difficult and intricate, and we had frequently to face suppression by government. We had to learn gradually by the process of trial and error. I think we

<sup>1</sup> *Discovery of India*, p. 679.

should have encouraged cooperatives from the beginning, and relied more on expert technical and scientific knowledge for the improvement of small machines suitable for cottage and village use."<sup>1</sup>

Thus, under the circumstances prevailing in India, Nehru regards both these forms of production—cottage and small industries as well as big or heavy industries—as necessary to some extent. He thinks it is a self-evident proposition about which there can be no controversy. The controversial question, which has to be considered, is what is the right proportion which should be maintained between the two:

"Thus even the enthusiastic advocates for cottage and small-scale industries recognize that big industry is to a certain extent, necessary and inevitable; . . . . Superficially then the question becomes one of emphasis and adjustment of the two forms of production and economy. It can hardly be challenged that, in the context of the modern world, no country can be politically and economically independent, even within the framework of international interdependence, unless it is highly industrialised and has developed its power resources to the utmost. Nor can it achieve and maintain high standard of living and liquidate poverty without the aid of modern technology in almost every sphere of life<sup>2</sup> . . . . . If technology demands the big machine, as it does today in a large measure, then the big machine with all its implications and consequences must be accepted. Where it is possible, in terms of technology, to decentralize production, this would be desirable."<sup>3</sup>

The third characteristic of the planned economy of India, according to Nehru, should be the nationalization of all Key Industries and Defence Industries and State control over the rest. In agriculture, both individual and collective farming should be tried. Export and import trade, banking and insurance should be carried on, or controlled by the State. In this way, private capital will be kept in check and India will be saved from the abuses which have resulted from capitalism

<sup>1</sup> *Discovery of India*, p. 489.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 490.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 491.

in other countries. Referring to the objectives of National Planning Committee of 1938, which represented his own views, he says :

"So, though we did not start with a well-defined social theory, our social objectives were clear enough and afforded a common basis for planning. The very essence of this planning was a large measure of regulations and co-ordination. Thus while free enterprise was not ruled out as such, its scope was severely restricted. In regard to Defence Industries it was decided that they must be owned and controlled by the State. Regarding other Key Industries, the majority were of opinion that they should be State-owned . . . . . In regard to other important and vital industries, no special rule was laid down but it was made clear that the very nature of planning required control in some measure, which might vary with the industry. In regard to the agency in the State-owned industries it was suggested that as a general rule an autonomous Public Trust would be suitable<sup>1</sup> . . . . . The cooperative principle should be applied to the exploitation of land . . . . . Cooperative farming could be combined either with individual or joint ownership. A certain latitude was allowed for various types to develop so that, with greater experience, particular types might be encouraged more than others<sup>2</sup> . . . . . We, or some of us at any rate, hoped to evolve a socialized system of credit. If banks, insurance, etc. were not to be nationalized, they should at least be under the control of the State, thus leading to a State regulation of capital and credit. It was also desirable to control the export and import trade."<sup>3</sup>

The underlying principle of all this planning is :

"By these various means a considerable measure of State control would be established in regard to land as well as in industry as a whole, though varying in particular instances, and allowing private initiative to continue in a restricted sphere."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Discovery of India*, p. 478.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 479.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

## CHAPTER VII

### THE FIRST STEP

#### *Towards a Welfare State*

NEHRU's conception of the Welfare State, which we put before the readers in the foregoing chapter, is incomplete in several respects. As far as its political configurations are concerned, he has confined himself to a few vague words which tell us no more than that he wants a democratic state in which the village is an autonomous unit and leaves us to imagine for ourselves what shape that order has to take. Of its economic structure, too, he has spoken in general terms which require a great deal of elaboration to give something like a clear picture. The fact is that Nehru is essentially a practical man and even as a thinker he has an empirical mind. He thinks only of the next step in the general direction of his ultimate goal, and does not bother about mapping out the whole route which has to be covered. He has enough critical judgment to refrain from blindly following any of the existing economic systems and to realize the necessity of working out a new scheme. Moreover, as he is given to the democratic way of life and does not want to bring about any big change without the willing consent of his people, he would have considered it to be wrong in principle as well as inexpedient to propound a ready-made economic system of his own and to force it on the country by dint of personal pressure, even if he had such a system. What he wrote with reference to the National Planning Committee of 1938 applies with equal force to the present Five Year Plans of the National Planning Commission:

"Constituted as we were, not only in our Committee but in the larger field of India, we could not then plan for socialism as such. Yet it became clear to me that our plan, as it developed, was inevitably leading us towards establishing some of the fundamentals of the socialist structure. It was limiting the acquisitive factor in society, removing many of the barriers to

growth, and thus leading to a rapidly expanding social structure. It was based on planning for the benefit of the common man, raising his standards greatly, giving him opportunities of growth, and releasing an enormous amount of latent talent and capacity. And all this was to be attempted in the context of democratic freedom and with a large measure of cooperation of some at least of the groups who were normally opposed to socialistic doctrine. That cooperation seemed to me worthwhile even if it involved toning down or weakening the Plan in some respects. Probably I was too optimistic. But so long as a big step in the right direction was taken, I felt that the very dynamics involved in the process of change would facilitate further adaptation and progress. If conflict was inevitable, it had to be faced. But if it could be avoided or minimized that was an obvious gain."<sup>1</sup>

This attitude of compromise was adopted by Nehru at a time when his party was only nominally ruling in nine Indian Provinces, while the real power was exercised by the Viceroy and the Provincial Governors. After Independence, when the Constituent Assembly gave a Constitution to the country, Nehru's leadership was not undisputed in his own party, so he had to compromise on a purely liberal Constitution, which a great majority of the members wanted. But even now, though his personal influence over the Congress Party, which is in power at the Centre as well as in the States with a large majority and generally over the whole country, has tremendously increased, and he is no longer obliged by any consideration of political expediency to adopt a moderate policy, he is proceeding slowly and making compromises at every step. The reason, as we have already said, is two-fold. Firstly, his critical mind does not let him pin his faith upon any of the prevalent economic theories or follow blindly any of the current economic systems. He wants to experiment with great caution, paying due regard to the circumstances and needs of his country and drawing inspiration from experiments made in other countries only to the extent to which

<sup>1</sup> *Discovery of India*, p. 480.

they apply to India, and conform to its cultural and moral pattern. Secondly, his democratic spirit demands that he should not, under the pressure of his personal influence, force his own ideas on his party or overwhelm his opponents by brute majority, but proceed slowly and try with patience and perseverance to win over every friend and foe to his point of view.

In view of the limitations under which Nehru has to work, it is easy to understand why there is a gap between the policy of his government and his own social and political ideals. In the Constitution prepared by the Provisional National Government headed by Nehru, there are two things which strike even the casual observer as unsatisfactory. While in its fundamental objectives it seems to be the Constitution of a Welfare State, the fundamental rights, which it guarantees, make it the Constitution of a purely liberal democratic State with hardly any scope for the State control of economic life which is necessary in a Welfare State. Moreover, no regard is apparently paid in the Constitution to the vague but significant idea of the local autonomy of the village to which Nehru had referred in his *Discovery of India* (page 637) published shortly before the drafting of the Constitution.

These shortcomings (if we may call them so) are, as we have already said, easily explained. Though Nehru is intellectually convinced that in the present world situation state or society must, wherever necessary, interfere in the life of the individual, yet his own inner disposition, his education in England, his training under Gandhiji and the whole trend of educated public opinion in India have combined to instil in him the deepest respect for individual freedom. So, in building his new India, he wants as far as he can to achieve his objectives by persuasion and without resort to compulsion. But when experience shows that compulsion cannot possibly be avoided, he uses the kind of pressure which can legitimately be exercised under a democratic system. That is, he adopts, with the support of the majority of Peoples' Representatives, legislative measures enforcing social reforms or economic justice, even if they involve minor changes in the Constitution.

As for the idea of the autonomous village, or the larger concept of liberating human society from the cramped life in the cities and bringing it closer to the soil and to nature, both have a place in Nehru's social philosophy, but it is difficult to say how much importance he attaches to them, as he has not discussed these questions in detail. We will see presently when we discuss his economic policy that he lays great emphasis on the economic prosperity and general welfare of the villages. But in this particular matter of making the villages autonomous political units, he has not shown any interest so far. Various Indian States have tried to revive the ancient *Panchayat* system, but the movement lacks the dynamism which Nehru's personal interest and guidance impart to works of national development.

It looks as if Nehru's attitude not only to the local autonomy of the village, but to the whole question of political re-organization, were a cursory one. He is fully conscious of its importance, but he probably thinks this is not the time for the final solution of the problem, and so he wants to devote all his attention and energy to the economic problem. He knows that industrialization, specially if it is planned and controlled by the state, leads to the centralization of political power and endangers the freedom of the small unit like the village and the liberty of the individual. He is not satisfied with this state of things, but he seems to regard it as unavoidable for the present:

"All this industrialization leads to the concentration of power . . . . and that power means a diminution or restriction, obviously, of national freedom and individual freedom. How to reconcile this inevitable centralization with individual freedom, is the problem of modern civilization."<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps a dim idea of how this problem can be solved is present in Nehru's mind. The words in which he speaks of the gigantic scheme of Community Projects and National Extension Service, launched in connection with the Five Year Plans, are significant:

<sup>1</sup> Prime Minister's speech, January, 1956.



"I would now refer to one thing to which I attach greatest importance, and that is these Community Projects and Extension Services. That, I think, is something which is basically revolutionary, if worked well."<sup>1</sup>

We should not be far wrong if we interpret the words "basically revolutionary" to mean that the awakening, the initiative, the self-confidence, which the implementation of the scheme is bound to produce, would have in them great potentialities of transforming not only the whole economic system but also the entire political structure. In other words, when our villagers achieve economic freedom mainly through their own effort, they will certainly be capable of securing political freedom, of loosening the bonds of centralized government, and making each village practically an autonomous unit in the federation of half a million villages that will be India.

Anyway, at this stage, Nehru wants to devote all the energy and the resources of the country to the raising of the present miserable standard of living of his people. In 1951 he got the opportunity of realizing what many people had supposed to be a mere idle dream twelve years ago. That is, he set up a Planning Commission of the Government of India, and started a series of Five Year Plans of national development of which the first has now been successfully carried out and the second is under way. His fundamental social ideas are still what they were in 1939. The only difference is that, though his way of thinking is still empirical and not dogmatic, he has now a comparatively clearer and more definite idea of his objectives. Formerly, he had put the aim of his economic planning into the following somewhat vague and general terms "a considerable measure of state control would be established in regard to land as well as industry as a whole, though varying in particular instances, and allowing private initiative to continue in a restricted sphere."<sup>2</sup>

Now the aim is decidedly more definite, though not rigidly determined:

<sup>1</sup> Prime Minister's address to the National Development Council, November, 1954.      <sup>2</sup> *Discovery of India*, p. 479.

“The picture I have in mind is definitely and absolutely a socialistic pattern of society. I am not using the word in a dogmatic sense at all, but in the sense of meaning largely that the means of production should be socially owned and controlled for the benefit of society as a whole. There is plenty of room for private enterprise there, provided the main aim is kept clear.”<sup>1</sup>

The general principles which he wants to follow in the delimitation of the spheres of activity of public capital and private capital, generally known as the public sector and the private sector, are these:

i. He would not like to interfere with the large-scale industries which are being run at present on private initiative unless they come in the way of national progress. But the Insurance Companies and Banks, which are the agencies for the large-scale raising of capital, may be nationalized:

“I do not believe in nationalization as such, because when you nationalize, you have got to pay compensation. I just do not see why we should waste our resources compensating unless something comes in our way and we have to change it. I am not referring to the services like banking and insurance, because they are basic and you may have to take them over but as regards the factories, I would rather put up a new factory than compete with the private factory.”<sup>2</sup>

ii. For the future, however, he would lay down that all heavy and large-scale industries as well as natural resources should be state-owned:

“As I conceive it, in future, I think all really big industries, all basic industries should be State-owned completely, all mineral resources and heavy industries and the like.”<sup>3</sup>

iii. Medium-sized industries, small industries, cottage industries as well as land should, according to him, be in the private sector which include individual owners and cooperative societies. Nehru is not opposed to individual ownership on principle but he thinks small and medium-sized industries

<sup>1</sup> Prime Minister's Address at the National Development Council, 1954.

<sup>2</sup> Prime Minister's Address, January 7, 1956.      <sup>3</sup> Ibid.

cannot compete with big industries unless they are run on cooperative basis :

"Obviously land and cottage industries are in private sector, although there too I shall like to see—and I think it is essential—the cooperative element coming in more and more. As a matter of fact, it is the only way you can succeed; the only way to meet high level centralization is to have cooperative centralization. There is no other way whether it concerns land or anything else. It cannot survive against the big unit ultimately, unless it is tied up with the cooperative system which gives it the same advantages as the big unit with the centralized apparatus."<sup>1</sup>

✓ Here we must make it clear that though the object of Nehru's planning is to increase India's production and raise the standard of living of her people, he would never like his country to go mad after this object, as some other countries are doing. ✓ He regards economic value as subordinate to moral value, and wants to secure it strictly within the limits of the moral law. He has observed that the intoxication of wealth and power, induced by the crazy race for the higher standard of living has brought the world to the brink of physical and moral destruction, and would keep his country out of this race :

"I do think that India, situated as she is, has a chance of developing on her own lines, a relatively high standard of living without getting into all the difficulties and dangers which this mad race for economic power has brought about. I am not anxious that everybody in India should have a motor car or, say a washing machine or a refrigerator. But I am very anxious that the right trend should be encouraged."<sup>2</sup>

Seven years have now elapsed since this experiment in economic planning was started and the First Plan has been carried out. Reviewing the results achieved, the National Development Council has endorsed the success of the Plan :

"The economy has responded well to the stimulus of the First Plan. Both agricultural and industrial production have shown

<sup>1</sup> Prime Minister's Address, January 7, 1956.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

substantial increases. Prices have attained a reasonable level. The country's external accounts are virtually in balance. The important targets proposed in the First Plan have been realised, and some of them have, in fact, been exceeded. Some 17 million acres of land have been brought under irrigation in these five years, and the installed capacity of generation of power has been increased from 2.3 KW to 3.4 million KW. . . . The Plan has introduced a new dynamic element in a long static situation. National income over the last five years is estimated to have risen by about 18 percent as against the original expectation of about 11 percent. Development expenditure in the public sector in 1955-56 is 2½ times the level in 1951-52. Investment in the private sector has also been close to expectation. "All this development has been achieved without excessive strains or imbalances developing in the economy. The Plan has evoked a great deal of cooperation and participation on the part of the people. It has created an atmosphere of confidence and, indeed, of heightened expectations."<sup>1</sup>

Of course, this is the opinion of those who have prepared and worked the Plan but it has been expressed with full sense of responsibility and on the whole endorsed by independent observers in and outside the country. Some people, however, especially some constructive workers of the Gandhian group have found two main faults with the First Plan, namely, that no special effort has been made to get rid of the course of unemployment which causes millions of people to fall into economic distress and moral depravity, and that enough attention has not been paid to strengthening the foundations of national life, that is, to the welfare of the villages.

The fact of the matter is, that originally the First Plan had almost completely ignored both these things, but during the last two or three years of the Plan period the pressure of public opinion made the Government realize these shortcomings and take whatever measures were possible at that stage to make up for them. In the Second Plan some emphasis

<sup>1</sup> *Second Five Year Plan, A Draft Outline*, published by the Govt. of India, Planning Commission, pp. 5-6.

has been laid on creating fresh opportunities for employment as well as on the development of the villages through the Community Projects and National Extension Services. But the critics to whom we have referred are not yet fully satisfied. They want the major part of the resources available for national development to be devoted to the promotion of village welfare and rural industries, so that the structure of large-scale industries are built on a firm and lasting foundation.

✓ The principal objectives of the Second Five Year Plan are stated by its authors to be:

- “(a) A sizeable increase in national income so as to raise the level of living in the country;
- (b) rapid industrialization with particular emphasis on the development of basic and heavy industries;
- (c) a large-scale expansion of employment opportunities; and
- (d) reduction of inequalities in income and wealth and a more even distribution of economic power.”

The Second Plan, showing greater daring and enterprise, proposes larger investments and lays down bigger targets than the First. The investment in the public sector in the First Plan was Rs. 2,000 crores; in the Second it is Rs. 4,500 crores. The main achievements of the first five years were an increase of 17 million acres in the irrigated area of land, of 1.1 million KW in the installed capacity for the generation of electric power and of 18 per cent in the national income. In the second five years, i.e., by 1961, there will be a further increase of 2.1 million acres in the irrigated area, of 3.4 million in the capacity for the generation of electricity and of 25 percent in the national income. The First Plan has carried the benefit of Community Projects and National Extension Services to 8 crore people. The Second Plan proposes to carry it to a total number of 32.5 crores i.e., practically to the entire rural population. As regards employment, in the First Plan period many new jobs were created, but the number of new entrants to the labour force during the

period was larger than the additional jobs. So things were, on the whole, a little worse than before. But the special attention being paid to this problem in the preparation of the Second Plan, gives us reason to hope that the increase in the opportunities of employment will at least keep pace with the increase in the number of people seeking employment. Besides, many people working in agriculture and small industries and rural industries, who are under-employed to-day, will be fully employed by 1961. So, on the whole, there will be appreciable improvement in the employment position.

There can be no doubt that the Five Year Plans have broken the spell of stagnation, apathy and listlessness that had almost crippled the economic life of the great mass of people in India, and has produced a slight wave of initiative and enterprise, which is slowly gathering force, and people at large are satisfied with the policy of economic planning which the government is pursuing. Yet there is plenty of opposition and adverse criticism too. Apart from the vested interests which are directly hit by collective planning, there are three types of critics :

✓(1) The constructive workers of the Gandhian group who, as we have already mentioned, complain that enough is not being done for the welfare of the villages and promotion of rural industries.

✓(2) The cautious financial experts who think that the Plan is over-ambitious and the amount of capital which it requires cannot be found without upsetting the whole economy of the country.

✓(3) The zealous revolutionaries who find the pace of change too slow.

The object we have kept before us in this book, is to state and explain different points of view and not to support or oppose them. But we would like to draw the attention of the critics of the third category to an aspect of the question which they have, probably, not taken into consideration. Large-scale industrialization brings about great changes in the social and

cultural life inside the country as well as in its foreign, political and commercial relations. If the change is too rapid, adjustment in the various departments of life becomes difficult; and the whole balance of national existence is disturbed. The history of modern Germany gives a good illustration of such a catastrophe. After defeating France in the Franco-German War of 1870-71, Germany got as reparations 5,000 million francs, which according to the economic standard of those days was a gigantic sum. She invested the whole amount in industrializing herself and the pace of the industrial progress was so fast that the entire face of the country changed as if by magic in a few years, with the result that the social and cultural life of the country could not adapt itself to the changing conditions, and the mal-adjustment marred the future of the great German nation. The deplorable story is told by an American writer, Howard Becker, who has made a close study of the social history of Germany:

"In every field there was a storm of economic activity and people were crazy after prosperity and pleasure. To give an idea of the intensity of this activity, it would be enough to quote a single set of figures. Between the year 1851 and 1871, 205 limited companies were established in Germany. Between 1870 and 1874, 807 new companies sprang up. That is, the pace of progress grew twenty-fold.

"At the same time there was a revolution in the vocational life, which completely reversed the ratio of the urban group to the rural group. While in 1800 at least four out of five Germans were engaged in agriculture, in 1900, four out of five worked at other occupations than tilling the soil or rearing cattle.

"Progress was the watchword not only in those classes of German society which could be called technical experts or executives but also in the intellectual circles. Architecture became too elaborate, ornate and banal, music pompous and sonorous, the graphic and plastic arts in their popular forms cheaply sentimental or chauvinistic or both. The learned and the academic people went in more and more for specialization—the foremost object being to get the Doctor's

degree—scepticism, relativism and positivism were in full bloom.”<sup>1</sup>

Other examples can be produced from current history to show that forcing the pace of industrial progress is not an unmixed blessing. While criticising the slow speed of Five Year Plans inspired by Nehru, it would be well to keep these facts before us.

<sup>1</sup> Retranslated from the German translation (pp. 56-7) of Howard Becker's book, *German Youth—Bond or Free*. The German translation was published under the title *Vom Barette schwankt die Feder*, by Vertage Greif, Wiesbaden, 1949.



## GANDHI OR NEHRU

THE RELIGIOUS and moral ideas of Gandhiji and Nehru are not essentially different. The difference lies in the degree of belief which each of them has in these ideas. Much that Gandhiji holds as absolutely certain, Nehru regards merely as likely, in some cases as very likely.

As far as moral principles are concerned, this difference is so little as to be hardly perceptible.

As a matter of fact, the most important difference in their religious and moral outlook is neither that of essence nor of degree. It consists in the fact that religion and morality do not have the same place in their scheme of things. For Gandhiji they are the whole of life, for Nehru only a part, though a very important part. Gandhiji regards religion and morality as the cardinal points which must be determined before one can find one's way to the ultimate goal of life's journey. He devoted his whole life to determining these points and setting with their help the course of his own conduct and that of the nation he was leading in the battle for freedom. Nehru conceives of religious truth as something like the straight line of Euclid; which has to be postulated but cannot (at the present stage of development of human mind) be actually drawn or perceived. But ultimate moral truths he accepts as axioms which neither require nor admit of any argument or proof. In both these cases he does not want to go deep into these problems, but merely touches the surface and passes on to practical questions.

As we said before, Gandhiji represents the religious mind and Nehru the secular mind of India. But both of them have reviewed the heritage of the past in the light of their own reason and moral sense, both have come into contact with the intellectual and social movements of the modern West, and have accepted and assimilated, each according to his own need, some elements of modern Western thought. So the view of life which each of them has developed possesses an individuality

of its own and cannot simply be labelled as old or new, Eastern or Western.

The religious mind of India, in its pure form, believes in a single ultimate value—salvation through realization of absolute truth. Other values, like beauty or love or knowledge, it regards as mere means subservient to the one great end. Material comfort or pleasure is condemned as an obstruction to spiritual progress, or, at the most, permitted to the limited extent necessary for maintaining life. At some stage or other, life itself is felt to be a veil covering the fair face of Truth which must be discarded.

Gandhiji's philosophy of life is composed largely of the religious ideas of the Indian mind which he has re-discovered through personal spiritual experience and re-arranged in the scale of values. The main characteristic of this re-valuation is that he regards Love as the sole means of the realization of Truth, and attaches almost the same importance to it as to Truth. At the same time he has, without the least hesitation, taken from the modern Western thought many ideas which were in harmony with his own fundamental philosophy of life, and assimilated them so well that they have become an integral part of it. His conception of the freedom and dignity of human individual is essentially religious, but the emphasis which he has laid upon it will hardly be found in the teaching of any religion, and is most probably influenced by the liberal democracy of the 19th century. His stateless society, which reflects the philosophical anarchism of some Western thinkers, is the extreme form of liberalism. His *Sarvodaya* is, as he himself acknowledges, inspired by Ruskin, and his "Bread-Labour" and *Satyagraha* by Tolstoi. His *ahimsa*, which occupies the central place in his philosophy of life, is not simply the religious idea he had received as a part of ancient Indian traditions, but something new which is informed by the spirit of equality, fraternity, gentleness, sweet reasonableness and tolerance which has come to him from the Western democratic conception. His *Satya* comprises, in addition to the traditional philosophical ideas of religious truth, the essence of modern scientific way of thinking,

Thus he has taken from the past and the present, from the East and the West all that appealed to him, transformed it with the magic touch of religion and assimilated it in his philosophy of life. In some respects he may be called the greatest modern, progressive, or even revolutionary that India has produced in our time. In the field of religion, he revolted against traditionalism and blind submission to authority, and opened the way for personal inquiry and rational thinking. In politics he taught us to fight fearlessly against all forms of tyranny and devised the new weapon of *Satyagraha* to carry on the non-violent struggle for freedom. In social life, he dealt a mortal blow to untouchability, to inequality of caste, to subjection and seclusion of women and other social abuses which had prevailed in our country for many centuries. In economic life, he shook the very foundation of the institution of private property by preaching the doctrine of trusteeship and non-possession (*aparigraha*).

But we must remember that above all Gandhiji was a religious man. He was the apostle of *Satya* and *Ahimsa*. He found for himself, and showed to others the way of Love that led to Truth. All his efforts for reform, progress, revolution were governed by the Law of Love, the code of non-violence. He did not believe in breaking the old moulds of social and economic life by external force. He strove to bring about an inward change of spirit, so that the outward forms would automatically change into new ones. So he often appeared to be old-fashioned, conservative, even reactionary to the zealous and impatient iconoclasts who wanted to smash the worn-out moulds of life at one blow.

But in fact, Gandhiji neither regarded the past and its traditions as sacrosanct nor the present and its innovations as bad in themselves. He disliked modern civilization in so far as it put obstacles in the way of complete individual liberty and true *ahimsa*, and was attracted towards the autonomous, self-sufficient village of the type which existed in ancient India, because he thought it would provide a favourable atmosphere for the growth of freedom and non-violence. He had no illusion that the ancient village economy was actually based on the

*ahimsa* of his conception. But he believed that true *ahimsa* was possible only in such a simple, decentralized society. In that society alone could the individual devote himself with singlemindedness to the search for Absolute Truth and reach it by the shortest route.

The secular mind of India which Nehru represents has something like an agnostic view of Absolute Truth but accepts moral law as absolute and supreme. Other values as knowledge, beauty, love or fellow-feeling it regards as ultimate values and strives to attain salvation through them. As for material comfort and pleasure, its attitude towards them has been changing from hedonism to ascetism. But generally it has kept the middle path, often deviating towards austerity.

The development of Nehru's view of life did not, as we have seen, go in a straight line like that of Gandhiji's philosophy, but was full of turns and twists till it reached the point where it had acquired a measure or firmness and stability. It had to pass through the stages of the sentimental religiousness of the East, dogmatic positivism of the West, and doctrinaire socialism, each of which left its mark on him. So when we call him the representative of the secular mind of India, we should be clear in our minds that it is true only to a limited extent. No doubt the general outline of the new humanism that inspires him is taken from secular Indian thought which sets aside the question of the realization of the Absolute, regards the quest of knowledge, the appreciation of beauty, and the love of humanity as ultimate values, and recognizes the law of morality, quite apart from religion, as an eternal law valid by itself. But to this Nehru has added some new features. His attitude towards Absolute Truth is not the traditional agnostic or sceptic attitude but the latest scientific one. He postulates Truth or reality as a hypothesis, as a distant goal which it is an innate need of human nature to pursue but, which is not possible at the present level of the development of knowledge to attain. He thinks the first stage of this arduous journey will be reached with the help of science and the second with that of philosophy. At the last stage where neither science nor philosophy

will avail "we will have to rely on such other powers of apprehension as we may possess."<sup>1</sup>

But Nehru departs from this line of thought as soon as he enters into the realm of morality. There the traditional Indian point of view, common to its religious and secular minds, proves so irresistible for him that he unhesitatingly admits not only its validity but its supremacy. What is more, the life-long influence of the personality and precepts of Gandhiji makes him subscribe to the principle "ends and means are not really separable but form one organic whole". If he had the time and opportunity to consider the full implication of these words, he would have made the startling discovery that he had unwittingly accepted the whole religious philosophy of Gandhiji.

Thus in spite of all the difference which superficial observers may see in the ideas of Gandhiji and Nehru about religion, those who have carefully studied the cultural history of India find that her religious and secular minds had never come so near to each other as in Gandhiji and Nehru. Throughout our history these two minds have shown tolerance towards each other. But here their mutual relations are closer and deeper than those based on mere tolerance could be.

A notable divergence in the ideas of Nehru and Gandhiji that we can expect to find, would be in the political and social fields, because here their starting points as well as lines of thinking are clearly different from each other.

The central political concept of Gandhian thought is that of individual freedom. Probably the seed of this idea had germinated in his mind as a result of the study of liberal democracy in theory and practice during his stay in England as a student. But the later development of this idea was mainly due to his religious belief that complete political freedom was a necessary condition of the spiritual progress and ultimate salvation of the individual soul. This combined with his doctrine of *ahimsa* to produce the concept of stateless society. But when Nehru came to England two decades after Gandhiji, liberal democracy was being challenged by social

<sup>1</sup> *Discovery of India*, p. 623.

democracy which regarded political freedom as insufficient and laid stress on economic freedom. The Western mind had begun to realize the inner contradiction of democracy in which unrestricted political liberty breeds economic inequality that strikes at the roots of freedom. So the fundamental idea which dominated Nehru's mind from the very beginning was that of economic freedom and economic equality—the essence of socialism. But this Fabian Socialism which influenced Nehru, attached no less importance to political freedom and sought to reconcile it with economic freedom.

The socialistic tendencies which young Nehru had developed in England were, for a time, suppressed by the over-powering sentiment of nationalism but never completely displaced. His own most profound spiritual experience—that of witnessing the grinding poverty and misery of the Indian peasant—further strengthened the idea that national freedom should bring in an economic system under which there is no exploitation of the toiling and labouring millions. Later on, the study of Marxism showed him that a planned and controlled economy was indispensable for the welfare of the people as a whole. At the same time he was convinced that the abject poverty of India could not be removed simply through an equitable distribution of its meagre products. The only way in which this could be done was to increase production to a high degree and with the utmost speed by adopting the modern industrial system. That was how the conception of the Welfare State, the essence of his political and social ideas, began to take shape in his mind.

If we compare the social ideal of Nehru with that of Gandhiji, we find that, though there are many common elements, there is considerable difference in composition and emphasis which make the total concepts look entirely different. Both have a firm faith in liberty as well as equality, but Gandhiji lays more emphasis on liberty and Nehru on equality. Ultimately the difference is that of the religious and secular points of view. Gandhiji's religious mind has so profound a faith in the essential goodness of man that when he thought of the ideal society which will come when human nature is developed to perfection,

he conceived of it as a stateless society in which the individual will have unlimited freedom. He believed that under ideal conditions when the individual is completely free and no outside authority interferes with his life, springs of love will well up from the depths of his being and determine the whole course of life and action. In that society no strong person would think of exploiting, tyrannizing over or trampling upon the weak; and if in exceptional cases anybody dared do it, the weak would fight him with the weapon of *Satyagraha* and thwart his unholy purposes. So there will automatically be maximum equality that is possible in spite of natural inequalities in that society.

But Nehru's secular mind is convinced by his study of human psychology and human history that if the individual is given unrestricted freedom, he usually abuses it to interfere with the freedom and rights of other individuals and this creates social inequality. So in order to distribute freedom equally to all members of society, it has to be rationed and each individual has to be restricted to his legitimate portion. The main field in which one individual exploits another is the economic one, so here it is all the more necessary to limit individual freedom through collective planning and control. Therefore, in Nehru's ideal society there will be planning and controls. But at the same time it will be seen that undue restrictions do not arrest the development of the personality of the individual, but he is given all the freedom that is consistent with the equal distribution of freedom and equitable distribution of wealth.

In other respects also the picture of ideal life as conceived by Gandhiji and Nehru are very much different. Gandhiji, like all religious people, believes in only one ultimate value—the realization of Truth—and wants to reach this goal by the shortest route, namely, through the love of God and His creation. So naturally his picture of ideal life is made up of a few simple lines in one single colour—the love and quest of Truth. No other hue of the variegated human life—be it pleasure, happiness, knowledge or beauty—can find a place in this picture unless it loses its identity and merges itself in the

dominating colour of Truth.

According to Gandhiji's concept of simple life mental enjoyment, just like physical pleasure, becomes a luxury if it is allowed to go beyond a certain limit. So not only our physical but also our moral needs should be reduced to the minimum :

"The satisfaction of one's physical needs, even the intellectual needs of one's narrow self, must meet at a point dead stop, before it degenerates into physical and intellectual voluptuousness."<sup>1</sup>

All knowledge which does not directly contribute to the realization of the ultimate Truth is not only useless but positively harmful. Ideas no less than material objects are possessions and, according to the principle of *aparigraha*, it is necessary for our spiritual progress to give them up :

"We would remember that Non-possession is a principle applicable to thoughts as well as to things, one who fills his brain with useless knowledge, violates that inestimable principle. Thoughts which turn us away from God or do not turn us towards Him, constitute impediments in our way."<sup>2</sup>

Similarly, art is for Gandhiji not an end in itself but a means to the one supreme end of the realization and expression of Truth. It has a value only in so far as it expressly conveys the message of God or directly helps in the realization of Truth. Though he does not outright reject the best specimens of human art, he thinks they are inferior as symbols of eternal truth and beauty to the spectacles presented by nature :

"All true art must help the soul to realize its inner self. In my own case, I find that I can do entirely without external forms in my soul's realization. My room may have blank walls; and I may even dispense with the roof, so that I may gaze out upon the starry heaven overhead that stretch in an unending expanse of beauty. What conscious art of man can give me the panoramic scenes that open out before me, when I look up to the sky above with all its shining stars? This, however, does not mean that I refuse to accept the value of productions of art, generally accepted as such, but only that

<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, 29 August 1936.

<sup>2</sup> *Yeravada Mandir*, p. 38.



I personally feel how inadequate these are compared with the eternal symbols of beauty in Nature. These productions of man's art have their value only so far as they help the soul onward towards self-realization."<sup>1</sup>

To the critics who think that Gandhiji's ideal life would be dull and monotonous, he replies that monotony is of two kinds—the monotony of idleness which kills the soul and the monotony of some useful activity which gives us life and joy. The latter monotony is the very soul of Nature as well as human life :

"Monotony is the law of nature. Look at the monotonous manner in which the sun rises. And imagine the catastrophe that would befall the universe, if the sun became capricious and went in for a variety of pastimes. But there is a monotony that sustains and a monotony that kills. The monotony of necessary occupations is exhilarating and life-giving. An artist never tires of his art. A spinner who has mastered the art, will certainly be able to do sustained work without fatigue. There is a music about the spindle which the practised spinner catches without fail. And when India has monotonously worked away at turning out Swaraj, she will have produced a thing of beauty which will be a joy for ever."<sup>2</sup>

But the ideal society that the new humanist Nehru dreams of, will not be of limited scope, plain and monotonous but will be characterized by harmony in vastness and variety. It will strive to achieve not one single ultimate end, the realization of Absolute Truth, but many other more or less independent ends :

"Of harmonious living, of a proper balancing of an individual's outer and inner life, of an adjustment of the relations between individuals and between groups, of a continuous becoming something better and higher, of social development, of the ceaseless adventure of man."<sup>3</sup>

The India of Nehru's conception will not confine itself to self-realization and self-control but will also play its part

<sup>1</sup> *Young India*, 13 November 1924.

<sup>2</sup> *Young India*, 18 August 1921.

<sup>3</sup> *Discovery of India*, p. 20.

along with other countries in scientific investigation and quest of Nature. Over and above the supreme value of Truth it will love other values which give beauty, grace and life. With full faith in the future it will not disdain to take delight and joy in the present :

"We have to make our own all the achievements of the human race and join up with others in exciting adventure. Man, more exciting today perhaps than in earlier ages, realizes that this has ceased to be governed by national boundaries and old divisions and is common to the race of men everywhere. We have to revive the passion for truth and beauty and freedom which gives meaning to life, and develop afresh the dynamic outlook and spirit of adventure which distinguishes those of our race who, in ages past, built our house on the strong and enduring foundations. Old as we are, with memories stretching back to the early dawn of human history and endeavour, we have to grow young again, in tune with the present time, with the irrepressible spirit and joy of youth in the present and its faith in the future."<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps the religious mind will see in this humanism the danger that man may lose himself in the vastness of life and the variety of beauty and forget the supreme end, but Nehru has complete faith in the human soul that it will not allow any allurements or obstacles to impede its way to the distant goal it has set for itself, but continue to trudge on and on along the dark and narrow path of the future leading to eternity, enjoying the beauty and joy of each fleeting moment, opening a hundred secret doors to the treasure-house of Nature, accomplishing a thousand feats of endeavour and adventure in its way :

"The future is dark, uncertain. But we can see part of the way leading to it and can tread it with firm steps, remembering that nothing that can happen is likely to overcome the spirit of man which has survived so many perils. Remembering that life for all its ills has joy and beauty, and we can always wander, if we know how to, in the enchanted woods of nature

<sup>1</sup> *Discovery of India*, pp. 620-1.

" 'What else is Wisdom? What of man's endeavour  
 Or God's high grace, so lovely and so great?  
 To stand from fear set free, to breathe and wait;  
 To hold a hand uplifted over Hate:  
 And shall not Loveliness be loved for ever?' "1

Thus we find that notwithstanding all the common factors in thought and action that bind Gandhiji and Nehru together, their concepts of ideal life differ from each other. Both set off on their endless journey from the same starting point—selfless love of their fellow men with the same object, realization of truth and the same equipment, rigorous moral principles. But as representatives of two different trends of the Indian mind, they adopt different styles of travelling, their destinations are wide apart and their ways, identical for the present, tend to part ultimately. Gandhiji wants us to proceed, with single-minded concentration, without looking to the right or the left along the shortest and the most direct path to the ultimate goal of Truth. Nehru, on the other hand, wants us to pursue the longer and the more circuitous way full of turns and windings, ups and downs, enjoying the fascinating panorama of diversity, taking delight in storms and stresses and yet seeking unity in diversity, harmony in discord and calm in storm. Those many thousand or many million sons and daughters of India, who along with Nehru used to follow Gandhiji on the path of love and service, and find themselves today in a state of mental confusion, should be quite clear in their minds that if each of them, as an individual, wants to find an ideal life for the future and a style of living for the present, he or she will have to choose, according to his or her natural capacity and bent of mind, one of the two goals which lie in the same direction and yet are not the same—the goal of Gandhi or of Nehru.

1 Chorus from the *Bachae* of Euripides - Gilbert Murray's translation, cited in *Discovery of India*, p. 23.

## CHAPTER IX

### GANDHI AND NEHRU

THE PATTERNS of New India conceived by Gandhi and Nehru were different on the ideal plane. But on the plane of actual life, where the ideal is modified by its impact on the real, they had become almost identical. Gandhiji was a religious man whom the search for truth led to the field of action. Nehru was a man of action who in quest of the right norms of conduct had come to Gandhiji and caught a glimpse of at least the moral facet of truth as the latter saw it. They agreed on many things and differed about others. But in practical life they were very near to each other. They could and did work in the closest and most intimate cooperation.

Truth has two aspects. One is seen in dreams and the other in waking life; one in idea and the other in reality. So every man of truth who aspires to act, and every man of action who loves truth, has necessarily to dream first and then to strive to translate his dream into reality. In dreaming man is free. He can look at truth in the mirror of his individual belief, in the light of his personal fancy and feeling. But when he has to put his dream into action he finds himself bound by circumstances and is forced to adjust his action to them. If the inner experience of truth which two persons have is not essentially different, their dreams may radically differ from each other, yet in the field of action the compelling force of the realities of life turns their steps in the same direction and they pursue more or less the same path.

Such was the case with Gandhi and Nehru. In spite of all that was common in their religious and moral ideas, the idiosyncrasies of their individual natures had led to considerable difference in their ideals of social life. But the patterns of actual society which they had envisaged for the near future, after adapting their ideals to the existing realities, showed very little difference and that too was such as could be adjusted without much difficulty.

Gandhiji, many people will be surprised to know, wanted India to be a secular state as Nehru did. In view of his deep religiousness, superficial observers are inclined to think that if it had been given to him to determine the Constitution of India, he would have made it a religious state. But it was really his deep religiousness that made him adverse to the ideal of a religious state in India. He knew that under the present conditions, a religious regime was bound to make some denominational faith the state religion and patronize its missionary activities. It might even deny the freedom of belief and practice, or, at least of preaching, to other religions. This he could never tolerate as it was a negation, not only of *ahimsa*, but also of his doctrine of the essential unity of all religions which he regarded as the very soul of the universal religion of man as well as Hinduism:

"The State should undoubtedly be secular. Every one living in it should be entitled to profess his religion without let or hindrance so long as the citizen obeyed the common law of land. There should be no interference with missionary effort, but no mission could enjoy the patronage of the State as it did during the foreign regime."<sup>1</sup>

But this was not the sole reason of his opposition to religious state. Even if there had been only one faith throughout the country, he would have still objected to associating the state with religion. He regarded religion as a personal matter and saw no reason why the state or society should meddle with it. Even state aid to religious institutions or for religious institution was, according to him, undesirable:

"Gandhiji said that he did not believe in state religion even though the whole community had one religion. The state interference would probably always be unwelcome. Religion was a purely personal matter. There were in reality as many religions as minds. Each mind had a different conception of God from that of the other."

He was also opposed to state aid, partly or wholly to religious bodies. For he knew that an institution or group,

<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, 24 August 1947.

which did not manage to finance its own religious teaching, was a stranger to true religion. This did not mean that the State schools would not give ethical teaching. The fundamental ethics were common to all religions.”<sup>1</sup>

In addition to their common emphasis on the secular character of the state, Gandhiji and Nehru also agreed that it should be a liberal democratic state. Gandhiji's ultimate ideal was a stateless society based on pure *ahimsa*, but his practical commonsense and wide experience of human nature had convinced him that man was not yet ready for such a society. For shouldering the responsibilities of complete individual freedom he required a comprehensive spiritual training which may take many scores of years or many generations or many ages. So, he was prepared to accept for the interim period a democratic state with a bias towards *ahimsa*, that is a state which governed the least and gave the utmost freedom. For such a state he laid down two important conditions :

(1) In general administration as well as in social reform and reconstruction it should, as far as possible, use persuasion instead of compulsion, and turn to legislation only as a last resort.

(2) It should adopt the policy of decentralization specially in regard to village, giving it the maximum amount of local autonomy and interfering as little as possible in its simple, quiet and even life.

Nehru's dream is a Welfare State which is generally equated with a socialist state. But the idea of a socialist state is associated with legislative compulsion and centralized administration, and Nehru was never and will never be socialist enough to approve of compulsion or centralization as such. His attitude to these questions is summed up in his own words that in the struggle for his Welfare State everything that comes in the way will have to be removed “gently if possible, forcibly if necessary”. Still, when he had the power to put his ideas into practice, he found that the influence of Western education

<sup>1</sup> *Harijan*, 16 March 1947.

as well as that of Gandhiji's teachings had made liberal democratic ideas so strong in the minds of educated Indians that he had to give India the constitution of an almost purely liberal state, based on maximum fundamental rights and civil liberty, for the individuals in which there is not much scope for forcibly removing obstacles in the way of the Welfare State. In the allocation of powers he had to adopt the federal principle, because he saw that in spite of passing through a period of complete centralization under the British rule, Indian mind had not forgotten many thousand year old traditions of decentralized administration. Specially in the last few decades the movement of national freedom had put so much stress on "provincial autonomy" that the idea had become entrenched in the minds of the people, and no government could now entirely ignore it. So he had to provide in the Constitution for maximum rights to the federating states which were consistent with the unity and integrity of the country. But really it was not merely the pressure of circumstances that made Nehru agree to a liberal constitution. He accepted it willingly because whatever his own ideas might be, he is liberal enough to respect informed public opinion. The fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution of India and the autonomy given to the states are proving to be obstacles in the way of a theoretically perfect, controlled and planned economy, and to some extent, in Nehru's programme of social reform, and will continue to do so even after the minor amendments to the Constitution which have recently been made. But Nehru can be completely trusted to face all difficulties and yet remain loyal to the Constitution of India as long as it has the support of public opinion.

Another sign of a tendency towards decentralization in our liberal state is the effort by the various states to provide for the ancient institution of *gram panchayats*. This effort is receiving full support of the central government headed by Nehru. If he could work out to its logical conclusion his idea of a political organization, under which each village will have a single vote as a corporate body and will enjoy full local autonomy, *panchayat raj* will become an actual reality,

and we will be able to say that Nehru's liberal state is the one envisaged by Gandhiji, which "governs the least" or, in other words, acts upon the principles of *ahimsa*, as far as possible, in the present imperfect society.

As a matter of fact the spirit of *ahimsa* is reflected in the whole conduct of Nehru. It looks as if his attitude to non-violence has again become what it was in 1920-21 when Gandhiji's influence had made him deeply religious, though he was not fully conscious of it. Though he was never interested in the metaphysical aspect of non-violence, yet its moral aspect (which was also religious in the wider sense of the word) had a great attraction for him:

"It attracted me more and more, and the belief grew upon me that, situated as we were in India and with our background and traditions, it was the right policy for us. The spiritualization of politics, using the word not in its narrow religious sense, seemed to me a fine idea."<sup>1</sup>

In 1922, when the movement of Civil Disobedience which had shaken the British Government was suspended by Gandhiji on account of the popular outburst of violence in Chaura Chauri, Nehru, like many other Congress leaders, had a terrible shock and his basic difference with Gandhiji over non-violence became more pronounced: "For us and for the National Congress as a whole the non-violent method was not, and could not be, a religion or unchangeable creed or dogma. It could only be a policy and method promising certain results."<sup>2</sup>

The "right policy" was now simply "a policy" for Nehru, the "spiritualization of politics" no longer "seemed to be a fine idea" to him.

But this change in his ideas did not affect his action to any considerable extent. In spite of all the trials and tribulations through which the Congress had to pass, in spite of the temptations offered by terrorist movements in India and abroad, he abstained from violence in word and deed and, probably, also in thought. Gandhiji, who knew Nehru more than Nehru knew himself, attached the greatest importance to his practical

<sup>1</sup> *An Autobiography*, p. 73.      <sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 84.



cooperation and was not unduly disturbed by any theoretical differences that existed between them. He was sure that this disciple and comrade of his, who was acting upon non-violence as a policy, would one day come to believe in it, if not as the Law of Love that leads to Truth, at least as the law of humanity that leads to true peace. That was why among many able and beloved leaders of the country he chose Nehru to be the executor of his political testament, his political heir:

"Jawaharlal is my political heir. He may differ from me while I am living. But when I am gone, he will begin speaking my language."<sup>1</sup>

Gandhiji had foreseen that when the responsibility for leading the Indian nation passed from him to Nehru and the latter had a closer view of the realities of life in his own country and the rest of the world, he would realize the full significance of non-violence, and would feel that, in order to save the world from its impending doom, it was not enough to adopt non-violence as a policy, but it had to be accepted as a creed and propagated throughout the world. *He has made it the keystone of his domestic and foreign policy* and is sending out his message of peace in words which are really a translation in the secular language of those used by Gandhiji himself. In his address to the Columbia University during his American tour he said :

"I would not presume to offer advice to other and more experienced nations in any way. But may I suggest for your consideration that there is some lesson in India's peaceful revolution which might be applied to larger problems before the world today? That revolution demonstrated to us that physical force need not necessarily be the arbiter of man's destiny and that the method of waging a struggle and the way of its termination are of paramount importance. Past history shows us the important part that physical force has played. But it also shows us that no such force can ultimately ignore the moral forces of the world; and if it attempts to do so, it does so at its peril.

<sup>1</sup> Gandhiji's address to A.I.C.C., Wardha, 1942.

"Today, this problem faces us in all its intensity, because the weapons that physical force has at its disposal are terrible to contemplate. Must the twentieth century differ from primitive barbarism only in the destructive efficacy of the weapons that man's ingenuity has invented for man's destruction? I do not believe, in accordance with my master's teaching, that there is another way to meet this situation and solve the problem that faces us."<sup>1</sup>

In clearer and more emphatic terms Nehru asserted in his speech in the U. N. Assembly, where he was addressing, as it were, all politicians throughout the world, that he had an unshakeable faith in the Gandhian principle of non-violence and did his best to put it into practice:

"However, we do not think that the problems of the world or of India can be solved by thinking in terms of aggression or war or violence. We are frail mortals and we cannot always live up to the teaching of the great man who led our nation to freedom. But that lesson has sunk deep into our souls, and so long as we remember it, I am sure we shall be on the right path. And if I may venture to suggest it to the General Assembly, I think that if the essentials of that lesson are kept in mind, perhaps our approach to the problems of today will be different; perhaps the conflicts that hang over us will appear a little less deep than they are and will gradually fade away."

Those who take a superficial view and have a literal mind will challenge our statement that Nehru's domestic policy is based on non-violence. They will point to the armed forces, military equipment, munition factories, police, courts of law and prisons, refer to the disciplinary and punitive measures taken by the government and ask: "Is this non-violence?" But they must realize that here the word non-violence has not been used by us in the absolute but only in the relative sense. The amount of violence which we see today was regarded by Gandhiji himself to be indispensable as long as there is a state. Nehru's non-violence means no more than that he is guided by the true

<sup>1</sup> *Jawaharlal Nehru Speeches: 1949-1953*, The Publications Division, Government of India, Second Impresion, 1957, p. 460.

spirit of democracy in his thoughts and action. But even this is not a small or an easy thing. He has to bear with ignorance, superstition and obscurantism which are most irritating to him; to put up with dissension, rivalries and intrigues which cause him distress; to witness social inequality and injustice which fill him with rage. In dealing with these and other evils he has to confine himself to the tardy and trying methods of discussion and persuasion. If he had wished he could have tried with possible success to set up a benevolent dictatorship, or at least made an attempt in which he would undoubtedly have succeeded, to impose his will on the parliament under personal pressure. But he did not do so and has no desire to do so.

It may be said it is his gentlemanliness (in political parlance an euphemism for weakness) that stands in the way of his trying to become a dictator. But when we see that in a number of countries in the world political leaders, whether they are weak or strong, regard dictatorship as the shortest way to social or economic revolution and at least make a bid to secure it, we can find no other reason why Nehru can resist this temptation except that he is inspired by the true spirit of democracy and saturated with the moral influence of Gandhiji.

As for Nehru's foreign policy, even the most severe of his critics, at least in India, would not deny that this policy is so infused with the love of peace and the spirit of non-violence that Gandhiji, if he were alive to-day, would have had no hesitation in endorsing it. When Nehru shouldered the responsibility for the government of free India, the world was divided into two armed camps—the Eastern and Western blocs—full of mutual suspicion, fear and hatred, and engaged in a war of deadly words, while every nation was seeking the doubtful protection of one of the two armed blocs against almost certain annihilation. India, poor and weak country, seemed to depend for its security, nay for its very existence, on the help of foreign nations. Acute food shortage, poverty and misery, subversive movements and ideologies were threatening to destroy it. It had within the shortest possible time, to stem the deluge of economic distress or perish. Apparently there

was only one way of quick economic recovery—getting foreign help in money and technical skill. To get this help India had to take but a single step to join either the one or the other, more easily the Western block. But Nehru did not take this step, because it led to violence, to war and finally to the annihilation of the human race. He risked the security, in fact, the very life of his people by deciding that India will not accept any help with strings attached to it from any source whatever, that she will not join any of the two blocks and will find some way or other to solve her economic problems mainly through her own effort. Under his guidance India adopted the policy of neutrality, of non-violence. But it was the dynamic neutrality of Nehru, the active non-violence of Gandhiji. It did not mean that India timidly withdrew herself from the international field seeking safety in seclusion, but that she tried patiently and persistently to dispel the miasma of doubt, fear and hatred that had enveloped the world, to win the confidence of as many nations as possible both in the East and the West and to persuade them to trust one another and the essential goodness and reasonableness of human nature. She urged them not to regard war as inevitable, not to cut through knotty international problems with the sword but to solve them with tact and prudence. These efforts made India the target of suspicion, accusation and ridicule but she did not give up till, at last, the day has come when her efforts seem to bear fruit, and there is a prospect of temporary peace, which may turn out to be a permanent one.

The non-violence of Nehru is being put to severe test in his attempt to come to a peaceful settlement of India's disputes with her neighbours, Pakistan and Ceylon, and her uninvited guest, Portugal. So far he has shown utmost patience in the face of all provocation, and there is every reason to hope that he will continue to do so till a peaceful and just solution of all problems is found.

But there is a harder test still, of his democratic spirit or non-violence. Many undesirable factors—the selfishness of vested interests, the conventional way of thinking of our economic and financial experts, the conservative mind of our

administrators and, worst of all, the general atmosphere of indolence, apathy and carelessness produced by centuries of subjection to foreign rule—are holding up the work of building a Welfare State which is his ambition, his dream, the very purpose of his life. And yet he is resisting the temptation of adopting violent methods by which these obstacles could be removed within the shortest time. He looks wistfully at the communist countries which have achieved spectacular results, at least for the time being, by using these methods. But he is compelled by his natural disposition and upbringing as well as by the moral influence of Gandhiji, to refrain from ways of violence, and has to take the longer and more tedious path of moral persuasion and democratic legislation. There can be no doubt that his attitude in the matter is, to a great extent, consistent with the policy that Gandhiji had envisaged for the national state of India. He has taken to heart the warning of his *guru* :

“It is my firm conviction that if the state *suppressed* capitalism, it will be caught in the coils of violence itself and fail to develop non-violence at any time.”<sup>1</sup>

And he is respecting the word given by Gandhiji on behalf of the Indian nation at the Round Table Conference in London :

“No existing interest legitimately acquired and not being in conflict with the best interest of the nation in general, shall be interfered with except in accordance with the law applicable to such interests.”<sup>2</sup>

But at the same time he is trying to make good the solemn statement which Gandhiji made from the same platform :

“For years to come India would be engaged in passing legislation in order to raise the down-trodden, the fallen, from the mire into which they have been sunk by the capitalists, by the landlords, by the so-called higher classes, and then subsequently and scientifically, by British rulers. If we are to lift these people from the mire, then it would be the bounden duty of the National Government of India, in order to set its

<sup>1</sup> *Modern Review*, October, 1935.

<sup>2</sup> *Nation's Voice*, Navajivan Press, Ahmedabad, 1922.

own house in order, continually to give preference to these people and even to free them from the burdens under which they are being crushed."<sup>1</sup>

As regards Nehru's policy of promoting large-scale industry, we have already shown that Gandhiji was prepared to accept it for the present, provided factories were located in the villages, were owned or controlled by the state, and adequate arrangements were made for the welfare of labourers. Also Gandhiji's own policy of encouraging village industries and generally improving the condition of the villages is going to be followed to a considerable extent in Nehru's Second Five Year Plan. So if the Plan is really worked in the spirit in which Nehru wants it to be worked, then we are justified in saying that this is the method of production which Gandhi and Nehru both envisaged for the interim period.

But there is one thing about which it may be said that though outwardly Nehru's attitude is what Gandhiji's would have been, it has not the same spirit. In the industrial sphere, he has allowed enough scope for the "private sector", that is, for the capitalists. But he does not accept Gandhiji's theory of trusteeship, and makes no attempt to awaken in the capitalists the sense of service and sacrifice, so that they could cooperate with the new economic policy with some self-respect and dignity. He appeals to their self-interest to persuade them that they should run their industries so as to combine private profit with public good. But this has been tried in other countries with little success. If history is a true guide, we can venture to say that in ordinary circumstances private capitalism cannot co-exist with public ownership of industry. Such co-existence is possible only when private capital is inspired by the spirit of trusteeship. However difficult it may appear, it is well worth trying. This does not necessarily mean that it should be left to the sweet will of the capitalists to act upon the principle of trusteeship. There could be legislation to ensure that private industries function more or less like public trusts.

Non-violence, as conceived by Gandhiji, demands that, before

<sup>1</sup> *Nation's Voice*, p. 71.

legislating for the abolition of industrial capitalism or *zamindari*, the reasonable section of the capitalists themselves should be convinced that the proposed law is necessary in the public interest. Nehru and his government have followed this policy in doing away with *zamindari* although it has meant too much fuss and delay. The bigger and more urgent question of re-distribution of land they have not touched simply because public opinion is not yet ready for it.

An equitable re-distribution of land or the introduction of collective farming which could give millions of landless labourers in the villages, a share in the ownership or use of land, is the most important problem for India. It must be solved within the shortest possible time if the country is to be saved from a bloody violent revolution. The ideal solution, in the Gandhian spirit, would be to persuade the landowners to give away part of their land for distribution among the landless rural workers or to make the whole land in each village collective property of all villagers. This may look very simple, but the sense of property has become so strongly entrenched in man, and specially the love for land has taken such deep roots in the heart of those who own it, that to take without violence from millions of landlords and peasant-proprietors a piece of land, which they regard as a bit of their flesh, is nothing short of a miracle. No Government, not even that of Jawaharlal Nehru, can work such a miracle. But Acharya Vinoba Bhave, who is after Gandhiji the leader of those who aspire to tread the path of pure *ahimsa*, has undertaken to do it. Nehru's Central Government and various State Governments have now begun to understand the importance of this movement. Some of them are also giving it their moral support and material help as far as Vinoba is prepared to take it.

Vinoba Bhave's Bhoodan is not merely a movement of land reform; it is much more than that. It is a social movement for the moral and cultural reconstruction of the Indian village mainly through the initiative of the villagers themselves. It is a religious mission of creating through selfless service the spirit of self-reliance and the capacity for self-help in the villagers. It is the spiritual counterpart of the gigantic pro-

gramme of Community Development launched in connection with the Five Year Plans. Those who have made an objective study of it think that this programme of village reform, though not very intensive, is more extensive than any, that was ever been undertaken by any government in the world. It can actually change, within fifteen or twenty years, the face of India from one end to the other, provided there is in the village people a spontaneous enthusiasm, an urge from within, and they are prepared to cooperate with the Government, of their own free will, and what is more, on their own initiative. That is something which cannot be created by the impersonal, inflexible, soulless machinery of the government, even though it is a national government. Vinoba Bhave is trying to create this urge, this enthusiasm through his Bhoodan which is thrice blessed; it fills with a new ardent zeal not only him who gives and him who receives, but also him who persuades the giver to give. Such zeal can invest with the breath of life Nehru's plan for progress, and make it the instrument of a real non-violent revolution, and also ensure the freedom as conceived by Gandhi and Vinoba of the village and of each individual living in the village.

So the way India is now going is the way of Gandhi and Nehru which is, and will for a long time to come remain, one and the same. It may towards the end split into two divergent paths and lead to two different goals. But on the other hand, the gap between the two goals may in the light of practical and spiritual experience, grow less and less till they meet at one point and the path may continue to be identical because the goals have become coincident.

To appreciate the full significance of the social experiments of Gandhi and Nehru, we should try to understand the crisis of ideas in the human mind following the collapse of the dogmatic optimism of the nineteenth century.

The Western thinkers in the nineteenth century applied the methods of physical science to economic and social life with some illuminating results. But in the first flush of success they flattered themselves that each of the partial truths which they had discovered under the name of liberalism, socialism



etc. was itself complete scientific truth no less absolute than the Absolute Truth of dogmatic religions. This self-delusion led to two deplorable results. Firstly, on the supposition that the final truth had been discovered, experiments which religious or moral thinkers or secular statesmen used to carry on in the social field, were discontinued. Secondly, liberalism and socialism, which had now fossilized into dogmatic beliefs, divided the world into two hostile camps, and the world hovered on the brink of an ideological war likely to prove a thousand times more disastrous than the religious wars of the past on account of the horrible new weapons.

Such is the terrible situation that has shaken the Western mind and made the more thinking people in the West realize that their social thought has so far not revealed to them complete truth but only partial truths which appear to be contradictory and mutually destructive. This is the crisis that Western thought is passing through today.

At this juncture two great men appeared in India—a godly man and a manly man. Both learnt much from Western thought, but instead of putting implicit faith in what they learnt, they decided to think for themselves—re-examining social questions in the context of the general world conditions of to-day as well as in the light of special Indian conditions. The one carried on his experiments with truth first on the moral and religious plane and applied the results thus obtained to social life. The other experimented in the light of the moral truth that was in him, directly on the political and social plane. With all their difference about the ultimate ideal they worked together for the freedom and progress of the country and indicated more or less the same way to work for the near future. Perhaps the whole world can study their life and work with some profit. But for the people of India, specially for those who started on their pilgrimage of national service and the service of humanity with Gandhiji and continued it with Jawaharlal Nehru, there can be no doubt that they have to follow with courage, perseverance, humility and the reverent but critical attitude of the seeker of Truth, one and the same way, which is *The Way of Gandhi and Nehru*.

# INDEX



# INDEX

- Abhaya*, 32  
*Agra*, 113, 114  
*Ahimsa*, 13-15, 20, 21, 25-27, 30, 33, 60, 99, 107, 153, 154, 155, 156, 164, 165, 167, 174  
*Ahmadnagar fort*, 111, 113, 114  
*Ajanta*, 113  
*Allahabad*, 94  
*Aparigraha*, 5, 20, 21, 27, 28-29, 30, 45, 154, 159  
*Arnold, Edwin*, 2, 32  
*Arya Samaj*, 1  
*Asteya*, 32  
*Atheism*, 2-3  
*Autobiography* (Jawaharlal Nehru), quoted, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 117, 128, 132, 167  
*Autobiography or Experiments with Truth* (Mahatma Gandhi), quoted, 9, 11, 40, 50  
*Avatars*, 20, 21  
*Bachae*, 162 fn  
*Becker, Howard*, 150  
*Benares*, 91  
*Besant, Mrs. Annie*, 91  
*Bhagwad Gita*, 2, 5, 17, 22, 25, 32, 49, 91, 98  
*Bhakti*, 16, 22  
*Bhave, Vinoba*, 80, 174, 175  
*Bhoodan*, 80, 174, 175  
*Bible*, 19  
*Bombay*, 3  
*Bondaref, T. M.*, 32  
*Bose, Nirmal Kumar*, 39 fn, quoted, 38-39  
*Bradlaugh, Charles*, 2-3  
*Brahmachari*, 27  
*Brahmacharya*, 6, 20, 21, 27-28, 29, 30  
*Brahmo Samaj*, 1  
*Bread-Labour*, 22, 31-32, 45, 74, 86, 153  
*Brooks, F. T.*, 91-92  
*Brussels*, 102  
*Buddha*, *see* Gautama Buddha  
*Cambridge*, 93, 94  
*Campbell-Bannerman*, 93  
*Caste*, *see* *Varnashram*  
*Categorical Imperative*, 34  
*Ceylon*, 171  
*Charkha*, 133, 137  
*Charlestown*, 4  
*Chaura Chauri*, 167  
*China*, 135  
*Christ*, 2, 4, 16  
*Christianity*, 2, 4, 5  
*Columbia University*, 168  
*Congress*, 59, 69, 77, 90, 94, 96, 100, 101, 103, 108, 141  
*Constructive Programme, Its Meaning and Place*, quoted, 77, 78, 79  
*Cow-Protection*, *see* *Goraksha*  
*Culture, Western*, its impact on India, 1, 90; Muslim, its impact on India, 1  
*Delhi*, 74, 113  
*Desai, Mahadev*, 55 fn  
*Dewey, John*, 109  
*Discovery of India*, 113, 115, 116, 142; quoted, 89, 90, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 141, 144, 156, 160, 161, 162

Durban, 3, 4, 6  
Dutt, Prof. Dharendra Mohan, 24

Education, Gandhiji's views on,  
8, 69-76

Einstein, Albert, 132

Ellora, 113

England, 2, 3, 4, 7, 62, 96, 156, 157

*Ethical Religion*, (M. K. Gandhi),  
quoted, 83

Euclid, 51, 152

Euripides, 162 fn

Fabian Society, 93

Fischer, Louis, 50 fn

Ford, Henry, 135

Gandhi, M. K. (Mahatma), 89, 90,  
94-95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101,  
102, 104, 107, 108, 110, 111,  
124, 125, 126, 127, 133, 137,  
142, 168, 170, 172, 173, 174, 175,  
176; the bases of his religious  
and moral ideas, 1-33; philo-  
sophy of life, 1, 8, 153-155;  
boyhood, 2; influence of Edwin  
Arnold's writings, 2; on Brad-  
laugh, 3; on Rajchandrabhai,  
3; on Tolstoy, 3-5; in South  
Africa, 3-4, 6, 7, 8, 35; 'most  
creative experience', 3-4; birth  
of *Satyagraha*, 4; *Brahmacharya*,  
6; *Sarvodaya*, 6; *Hind Swaraj*,  
7; *Nitidharma*, 8; on Educa-  
tion, 8; *Moksha*, 9; infusion of  
moral ideas in the political  
movement, 9; 'morality essence  
of religion', 10; practical basis  
of his philosophy, 11; his religi-  
ous creed defined, 11-12; *Satya*,  
keystone of his thought, 12-13;  
*Ahimsa*, after *Satya* the most  
significant, 13-15; on religion,

16; his ethical religion, 17;  
on Hinduism, 17-22; re-valua-  
tion of Hindu religious values,  
21; *Satya*, its meaning in his  
writings, 23-27; and *Brahma-  
charya*, 27-28; and *Aparigraha*  
(non-possession) 28-29; salva-  
tion only through service of  
fellowmen, 30; and Bread-Lab-  
our, 31-32; his Social Ideal,  
34-48; religious motive for  
entering politics, 35; his social  
ideal based on the greatness  
of human personality, 35-37;  
his ideal society (Ramrajya),  
37-39; *Satyagraha* as the means  
of sustaining it, 39; on *Varna-  
shram*, 40-41; on Economics,  
41-45; and Socialistic order, 44;  
and *Swadeshi*, the moral basis  
of his economics, 46; and econo-  
mic decentralization, 46; and  
modern industrialization, 47-48;  
on Indian villages, 48; his pic-  
ture of India after Independence,  
49-67; on compromise, 50-52;  
on State or Government, 52-56;  
on Indian Swaraj, 53; on Inter-  
nationalism, 54-55; on State and  
non-violence, 55-56; on trustee-  
ship and private property, 57-58;  
on Indian capitalists, 59; on  
legislation, 60-61; at the Round  
Table Conference in London, 60;  
on taxation, 61-62; on machi-  
nery, 62-64; on Singer and  
Singer Sewing Machine, 64;  
on standards of living, 65;  
on village swaraj, *gram panch-  
ayats*, 65-67; on Basic Education  
—Constructive Programme—  
*Satyagraha*, 68-88; on *Nai-talim*  
or Basic Education, 69-76; on  
*Satyagraha* and Constructive  
Programme, 76-77; and un-  
touchability, 78; on prohibition,

# INDEX

- 78 ; on *khadi*, 79 ; on cow-protection, 79 ; on *Satyagraha*, 80-88 ; on the nature of *Satyagraha*, 82 ; the objects for which it can be offered, 84 ; the persons qualified to offer it, 84 ; the training of *Satyagrahis*, 85 ; the technique of *Satyagraha*, 88 ; setting up the *Satyagraha Sabha*, 95 ; as seen by Nehru, 97, 102, 108 ; social ideal similar to Nehru's, 107 ; or Nehru, 152-162 ; apostle of *Satya* and *Ahimsa*, 154 ; and individual freedom, 156 ; lays stress on liberty, 157 ; social ideal compared to Nehru's, 157-158 ; ideal life compared to Nehru's, 158-162 ; on art, 159-160 ; and Nehru, 163-176 ; in practical matters views similar to Nehru, 163 ; on the secular State, 164 ; agreement on the nature of the State, 165 ; on Nehru, 168 ; address at the Round Table Conference, 172-173
- Garibaldi, 93
- Gautama Buddha, 2, 78, 123
- German Youth—Bond or Free, quoted, 150-151
- Germany, 150
- Gita*, see *Bhagwad Gita*
- Glimpses of World History*, 114, 115
- Goraksha, 19, 21
- Gram Panchayats, 66-67, 166
- Harijan, 78 ; see also *Varnashrama*
- Harijan*, quoted, 13, 14, 15, 29, 34, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 45, 46, 47, 48, 50, 51, 53, 56, 58, 59, 60, 62, 66, 67, 68, 71, 73, 76, 81, 83, 84, 85, 87, 159, 164, 165
- Harrow, 92, 93
- Hind Swaraj*, 7
- Hindu Dharma*, quoted, 21
- Hinduism, 27, 32 ; new movement in the 19th century, 1 ; Vite sect of, 2 ; their influence on Gandhi, 2 ; his attitude towards it, 16-22 ; *Sanatan* re-valuation of its ideal
- Islam, 22
- Italy, 7, 93
- Jainism, 2
- Jamia Millia, 74
- Johannesburg, 4, 7
- Kabir, 22, 44
- Kant, 14, 34
- Khadi*, 79
- Kingdom of God Is Within*
- Lenin, 125
- Light of Asia*, 2
- London, 4, 60, 93, 172
- Love, Law of, see *Ahimsa*
- Machinery, Gandhiji's view 47-48, 62-64 ; Nehru's view 134
- Maritzburg, 4
- Marx, Karl, 105, 106, 125
- Modern Review*, quoted, 39, 172
- Moscow, 102
- Mott, Dr. John R., 3
- Murray, Gilbert, 162 fn
- Nabha Jail, 101
- Nai-talim*, see Education
- Nanak, 22
- Natal, 4

National Planning Committee (1938), 132, 133, 139, 140  
*Nation's Voice*, quoted, 13, 61, 172  
 Nehru, Jawaharlal, 10, 79; the moral and spiritual ideas of ; Nehru, 89-126; on modern mind, 89; secular spirit in him, 90; and early religious education, 90-91; and F. T. Brooks, 91-92; interest in science, 91; on father, 92; at Harrow, in England, 92-93; influence of Garibaldi, 93; and Socialism, 93; and Ireland, 93-94; joins the Congress, 94; and Rowlatt Bills, 95; and his father, 95; contact with Indian peasants, 95-96; on Gandhiji, 97; on Congress movement, 98; on *Satyagraha*, 98; on Gandhiji's views of machinery, 99; conflict with Gandhi, 99; personal tragedy, 100; and the current movements, 100-101; spiritual crisis, 101; discontent with Gandhian and Congress ideals, 101-102; on Gandhiji, 102; on the need for national outlook as the basis of action, 102; goes to Europe, 102; attends the Congress of Oppressed Nationalities at Brussels, 102; in Moscow, 102; Nationalism to be buttressed with a social goal, 103; on the Congress, 103; secular outlook in politics, 104; the importance of religion, 105; on Marxism, 105-106; social goal, 107; its similarity with Gandhiji's Ramrajya, 107; differences with Gandhiji, 108; his scepticism, 109; oscillating between the East and the West, 110; on Gandhiji, 111; in prison, Ahmednagar fort, 111; studies the cultural history of

India, 113; *Discovery of India*, 113; his travels in India, 114; *Glimpses of World History*, 114; and fascism, 116; on the limitations of the scientific method, 117-118; and scientific humanism, 119; and the *Advaita* philosophy of the *Vedanta*, 120-121; on the doctrine of *Karma*, 121; on Truth as ultimate reality, 122; concentration on immediate problems of life rather than resolving fundamental questions, 122-123; social problems, 124; and Marxism, 125; on the ethical approach to life, 125-126; Nehru's political and economic ideal, 127-139; his political creed, 128; his conception of State, 129; on equality, 129-130; on caste, 130; on collectivism, 131; his economic philosophy, 131-132; President of the National Planning Committee of the Congress (1938), 133; on its report, 133, 140-141; on *Charkha*, 133; on modern machinery 134; on small-scale and cottage industries, 135-138; on INDUSCO movement in China, 135; on modern civilization, 136; on nationalization, 138-139, 145-146; towards a Welfare State, 140-151; and the Indian Constitution, 142; setting up of the Planning Commission, 144; on the First Five Year Plan, 146-147; or Gandhi, 152-162; represents the secular mind of India, 155; religious philosophy similar to Gandhiji's, 156; and Socialism, 157; social ideal compared to Gandhiji's, 157-158; ideal life compared to Gandhiji's, 158-162; his picture of ideal society, 160-161; and

- Gandhiji, 163-176; in practical matters views similar to Gandhiji 163; agreement on the nature of the State, 165; and the Welfare State, 165-166; on *Ahimsa*, 167; and his address during his American tour, 168-169; in the U.N. Assembly, 169; and foreign policy, 170-171
- Nehru, Motilal, 92, 95
- Nitidharma*, 8
- Non-possession, *see Aparigraha*
- Non-Violence, towards perfect, 68-88, *see also Ahimsa*
- Oudh, 95, 114
- Pakistan, 171
- Paramhansa, Shri Ramakrishna, *see Ramakrishna*
- Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi*, 24 fn
- Phoenix Settlement, 6, 8
- Plymouth Brethren, 5
- Portugal, 171
- Prarthana Samaj, 1
- Pretoria, 3, 4
- Property, Gandhiji's view on, 5, 28, 57-62, *see also Aparigraha*
- Punarjanma, 21
- Quakers, 5
- Quran, 5, 19
- Rajchandrabhai, 3, 5
- Rajkot, 80
- Ramakrishna Paramhansa, Shri, 1
- Ramanuja, 1
- Ramayana, 18
- Rolland, Romain, 109
- Rowlatt Bills, 95
- Ruskin, John, 6, 22, 32, 153
- Russo-Japanese War, 92
- Sarvodaya*, 6
- Satya*, 12-13, 20, 21, 23-27, 33, 153, 154
- Satyagraha*, birth of Satyagraha, 4; 6, 7, 37, 39, 58, 59, 60, 69, 76, 80-88, 98, 99, 108, 154, 158
- Satyagraha Sabha*, 95
- Satyagrihis*, 7, 8, 84; training of, 85-88
- Second Five Year Plan, 148-149, 173
- Self-Restraint versus Self-Indulgence*, quoted, 28
- Servants of India Society, 90
- Sewagram, 74
- Shankaracharya, 1, 29
- Singer Sewing Machine, 64
- Sinn Fein, 94
- Song Celestial*, 2
- South Africa, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 31, 69, 35, 78, 81, 86, 87
- Speeches and Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, quoted, 15, 31, 43, 44, 49
- Srutis*, 20
- Sufis*, 3, 16, 22
- Swadeshi*, 46
- Tagore, Rabindranath, 90
- Theosophy, 2, 5, 91
- Thoreau, Henry David, 53
- Tolstoy Farm, 7
- Tolstoy, Leo, 3, 5, 22, 32, 153
- Transvaal, 4
- Truth, Law of, *see Satya*
- Tulsidas, 18
- United Nations Assembly, 169
- Unto This Last*, 6, 32
- Upanishads, 19, 91



- Vanaprastha*, 27  
*Varnashrama*, 19, 20, 21, 40-41  
*Vedas*, 5, 19, 20  
*Vidya Mandir*, 17  
*Women and Social Injustice*, quoted, 72  
*Yeravada Mandir*, quoted, 16,
- 23, 25, 26, 29, 30, 32, 42,  
 159  
*Young India*, quoted, 10, 12, 14,  
 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25,  
 35, 38, 39, 40, 41, 44, 47, 50,  
 51, 53, 54, 55, 57, 58, 59, 62,  
 63, 64, 65, 73, 82, 84, 86, 160  
 Zamindari, 174  
 Zend Avesta, 19

